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SF WEEKLY BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO 2013

Among major world cities, few feel as much like a circus as San Francisco. The spirit goes beyond the energy, the momentum, the lights; every good city has these. But San Francisco embodies the chaos and wildness and dirtiness of a circus, and all the spectacle and carnality and body paint of a cirque.

There is, too, a sense of transience – the city is constantly changing its games and attractions, ropes and canvas going taut here or there at any given point in time. Transient too because of the people moving through it. All the excitement of a circus – it appears in a blast of train cars and activity and rises in some field and draws people to it before disappearing into the night – that's what's exciting about San Francisco. (Except sometimes we're the ones who pack up and leave.) It's a city that seems always at play. And, like the circus, this is where people run away to.

So what we've gathered here is some of that spirit, the people and events and places that seem to have spilled out from some secret big top hidden in the streets of the city. Those things the big colorful tarp couldn't contain. In short, San Francisco differs from a regular circus in one significant way: Its spectacles are everywhere, its sideshows are down practically any good alley, its performers are, naturally, us.

The lights go down, the lights come up. Showtime.

BIG TOP BY THE BAY

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Sardine Family Circus at Pier 39. Photo by Frank Gaglione

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Audette Sophia. Photo by Michael Starghill

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT
Shannon Gaines and Dwoira Galilea of Vau-de-Vire Society at the Gyroid Climber at the Exploratorium. Photo by Gil Riego Jr.

SHOPPING & SERVICES:
Trangela Lansbury at Joe's Barbershop. Photo by Gil Riego Jr.

FOOD & DINING
Andrew Nilsen at Lolinda. Photo by Godofredo Vasquez

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Elena Sanders at Monarch. Photo by Mike Hendrickson

People and Places

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★ FEATURED PERFORMERS ★

SARDINE FAMILY CIRCUS

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BEST SIDESHOW
ROSS MIRKARIMI CIRCUS

If it hadn't been for the shitshow San Francisco sheriff Ross Mirkarimi created when he grabbed his wife last year, then public nudists would definitely have won this category. Alas, Mirkarimi's ascension to sheriff, followed by the bruise he gave his wife, the restraining order involving his son, his suspension from office, his admission of guilt (sort of), a few tears shed, and a standoff with Mayor Ed Lee created a sideshow bigger than any penis you'd ever spot in San Francisco. It certainly gave a new meaning to the phrase "media circus."

BEST CLOWN HAIR
GEORGE GASCÓN

Duh! Everyone has talked about District Attorney George Gascón's bedhead since he moved to San Francisco in 2009. His trademark tuft could easily be mistaken for the hair stylings of a man who just doesn't own a brush. But we know better. If this city is a circus, than Gascón's crazy cowlick is a wig worn only under the big top.

BEST DISAPPEARING ACT
GAVIN NEWSOM

We imagine that in college, Gavin Newsom was chief of the Cherokee fade — you know, when someone drinks too much and leaves a party without saying goodbye to anyone. The former mayor, known for dashing away to Hawaii unbeknownst to his staff, then dashed away from his job as mayor to take up the position as the state Lieutenant Governor in Sacramento, where he reportedly often dashes off to God-knows-where.

BEST POLITICAL CLOWNS
PUBLIC NUDISTS ON JANE WARNER PLAZA

The naked people almost didn't win this category until one day a few of them got dressed and went to City Hall for a meeting. When we got a glimpse of the nudists' fashion (looks like they robbed everyone on the Love Boat), we finally understood why clothing just didn't seem like a viable option for them. Now we're stumped. What's worse: a naked clown or a group of naturists in mismatched Goodwill clothing?

BEST CIRCUS STILT WALKER
SCOTT WIENER

What are the advantages to being a really, really tall city supervisor — specifically a 6-foot-7 supervisor? Well, aside from maybe getting a larger chair to sit in for those marathon supervisor meetings, you become an official contender for the SF Weekly Best of Contest. Such is the case with Supervisor Scott Wiener, whose loftiness, both physically and legislatively, has made him stand above all the other city supes this year. It definitely wasn't his larger-than-life personality that made him stand out, so he's gotta be walking on stilts?

BEST CITY HALL MAGICIAN
ROSE PAK

If anyone can work (black) magic at City Hall, it's obviously Rose Pak, the guileful Columbia journalism school grad and former Chronicle reporter who, by means of hocus pocus, got Ed Lee elected mayor in 2011, whether he really liked it or not. The profane Pak never misses a chance to be the wizard behind the curtain, and she never misses a chance to have a drink with Willie Brown, her other political half — mostly keeping to herself until it's time to cast another spell, one that keeps her magic show politically fascinating.

READERS POLL WINNERS

BEST CHANGE SINCE 2012
BAY BRIDGE LIGHTS

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THE CASTRO THEATRE

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD
THE MISSION

BEST PEOPLE WATCHING
DOLORES PARK

BEST PERSON TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER
MARINA GIRL @MARINAGIRLSAYS

BEST PLACE TO HEAR RANDOM SCREAMING AT 3 A.M.
TENDERLOIN

BEST PLACE TO TAKE VISITORS
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BEST STREET PERFORMER
THE BUSHMAN

BEST VIEW
TWIN PEAKS

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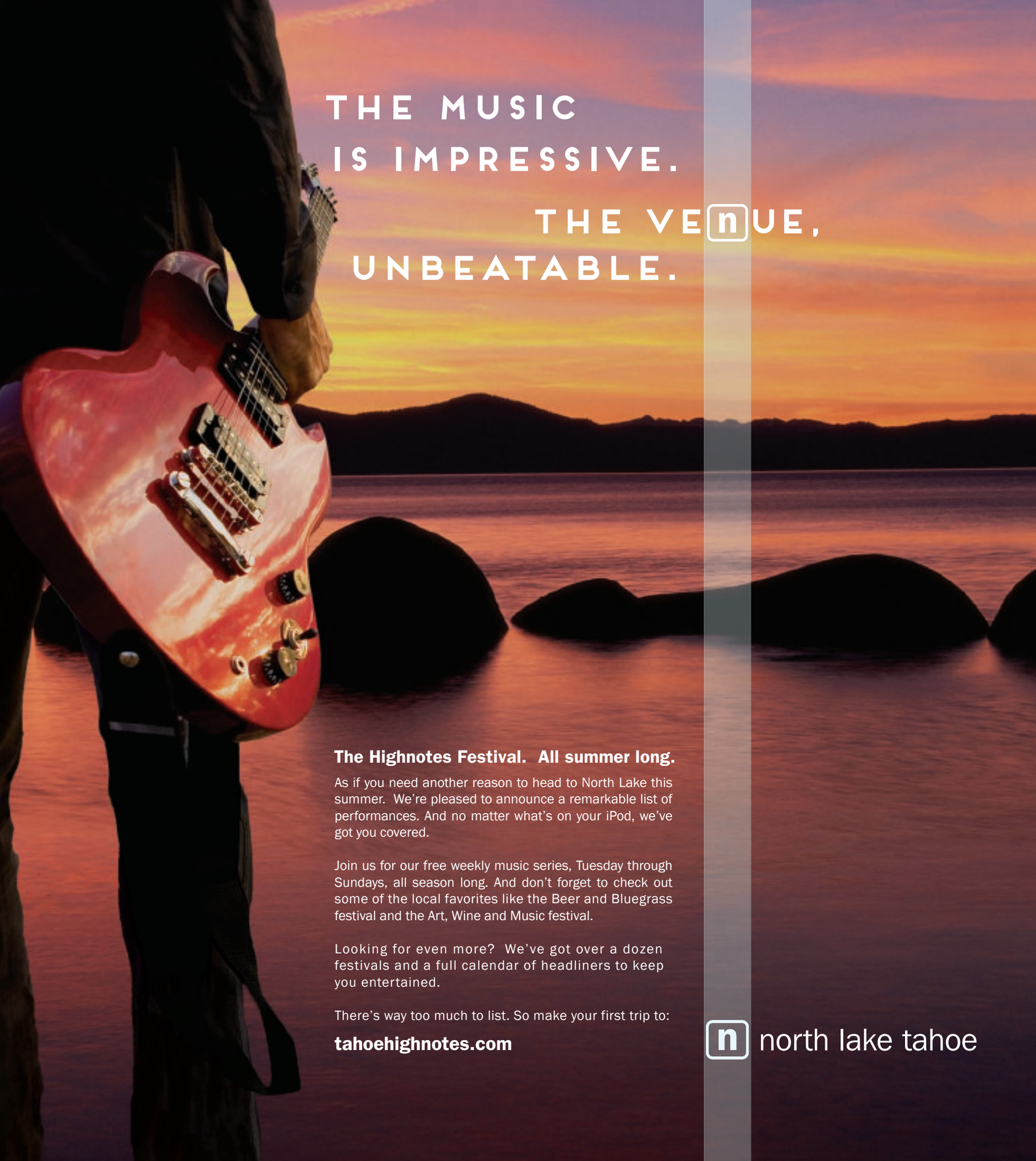
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BEST LOCAL TWITTER ACCOUNTS

BY MIKE BILLINGS

Certain celebrities, and maybe even your own friends, provide comedic relief through their Twitter accounts. But for a real dose of San Francisco-style humor on the social media network, you should follow these accounts.

Marina Girl
@MARINAGIRLSSAYS

Description: This account is an amalgamation of everything stereotypical anyone could dream up about the Marina. Picture a single woman, wearing yoga pants while sipping a latte at brunch while discussing her previous night out bar hopping and the workout she is doing later to burn off the carbs from the meal.

Tweet: Feb 12: I mean, I don't always hang out in the Marina. For example, once, I went to the Kabuki for a screening of the Hangover 2

SF Muni Train
@SFMUNITRAIN

Description: If you think you see it all while riding on Muni trains, imagine how much the light-rail vehicles see for themselves. Now you can follow along for what the train would see, but beware: It's not always a pretty sight.

Tweet: June 9, 2011: Good Morning Twitter, who's up for getting to work late?

San Francisco BOS
@SANFRANCISCOBOS

Description: Politics in San Francisco has the long-running perception of farcical resolutions and divergences from important topics. This account skewers the topics of the day with a light-hearted approach to what our supervisors could do.

Tweet: April 21: We propose a new half-cent sales tax in San Francisco to fund the $18M garbage cleanup from the annual 420 celebration at Hippie Hill.

Transamerica Pyramid
@TRANSAMERICABDG

Description: Love it or hate it, the point-topped building still is the tallest building in the city. And if you follow it, you can enjoy some of its pointed tweets.

Tweet: Nov. 15, 2012: Building porn is not what I thought it was

Karl The Fog
@KARLTHEFOG

Description: He's the fog, and whether he is stalking the coast, taking over the city or sulking during the few warm days that come around each year, he has something to say about it. In addition, he shares photos of himself from Instagram.

Tweet: April 18: Use sunscreen this week. This is the longest you've been exposed to UV rays in awhile. I would know since I caused your pasty skin.

San Francisco Sun
@LUCYTHESUN

Description: San Francisco is not known for its sun, especially in the summer months, so it tends to get overshadowed by the fog and clouds. But if you don't take warm, sunny days for granted, you should be following the sunshine, which also gives some good tips about when you may not be feeling so well.

Tweet: March 14: Lowering your expectations. See you this weekend #SanFrancisco

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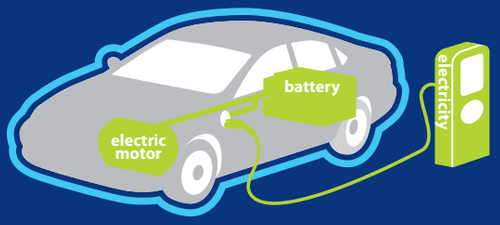

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BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO

Best Local Twitter Accounts
from p10

AT&T Park Seagulls
@ATTSEAGULL

Description: They may evacuate all over the seats at the end of Giants games where they show up for food, but there is nothing crappy about the point of view of the famous gulls. Plus, they are giant Giants fans.

Tweet: May 5: Apologies. Those three seagulls on the field have no affiliation with us. They're #Dodgers fans.

SF Siren
@SFSIREN

Description: Does the noon warning system siren every Tuesday still catch you off guard and make you wonder if there was an earthquake or if there is a tsunami coming? If so, then you need to follow this account, which typically reminds followers that it was only a test.

Tweet: Feb 3: This time I'm crying for the 49ers.

The Bay Bridge
@SFBAYBRIDGE

Description: In real life, the Bay Bridge may play second fiddle in popularity when matched up with the Golden Gate Bridge, but no other span in the Bay Area has anything on the grey monster when it comes to Twitter. The bridge has a unique view of goings-on on both sides of the Bay and everything in between.

Tweet: Nov. 5: If you're only going to wait in one exorbitantly long line tomorrow, make sure it's line for the voting booth, not line for my toll plaza.

Waves_SF
@WAVES_SF

Description: With the ocean and the Bay lapping at three sides of San Francisco, no one is really ever that far from the water. In case you need a reminder about that, or care to know tidbits like the water temperature at Ocean Beach (which is never tropical), this is the account to follow.

Tweet: April 23: Can we all switch from tweeting to writing messages in the sand? No need to edit, I'll eat your typos and mistakes. Gone forever in the sea.

BEST PLANNED FREAK SHOW
SWORD SWALLOWERS

If you have a natural proclivity to swallow sharp objects, in particular knives, why not just join the circus? Everyone enjoys a good freak show, and in San Francisco, the only challenge is to be freakier than the person next to you. After living in the Bay Area for more than 10 years, this was the first year we had the pleasure to observe natural sword swallowers. You know, the people who spend their Saturday afternoon proving they have a better gag-reflex than you. These guys love to shove big-ass swords down their throats every year on World Sword Swallowers day during a freak show on Fisherman's Wharf. And you thought your drinking habits were masochistic.

BEST POLITICAL QUOTE
JOHN AVALOS

What's the opposite of smooth sailing? Unsmooth sailing? Whatever it is, the America's Cup has experienced it. If nothing else, the incredible shrinking regatta inspired this year's best political quote. When it became clear that private fund-raisers would not meet their goals, leaving the city in the lurch, Avalos exclaimed, "All the members of the Board of Supervisors were fucking played." This was the quote heard 'round the world: In a Le Monde piece regarding the Cup, Avalos' profane utterance was deftly translated as "tous les membres de l'assemblée se sont fait foutrement avoir." D'accord!

BEST "RUNNING AWAY TO THE CIRCUS" DREAM REALIZED
BART SHEPHERD

The director of the Steinhart Aquarium at the California Academy of Sciences was just 6 years old when he became an aquarium hobbyist, and spent his childhood in Chesapeake Bay exploring wild salt marshes and coastal habitats. And as an adult, the focus of Bart Shepherd's days hasn't changed: Now he manages the living collection, develops exhibitions, and cultivates its coral reef programs. He can often be found swimming inside the tank, but his diving duties on the museum's behalf extend to far flung corners of the world. He often accompanies colleagues on research and collecting trips, even braving subaquatic dangers during an expedition to the Philippines — where he helped discover almost 300 species new to science.

BEST-PLACED DIRECTOR

EVAN JACKSON LEONG

EvanJacksonLeong.com

Evan Jackson Leong didn't just get interested in basketball phenom Jeremy Lin when Lin came off the bench for the New York Knicks in February 2012, scoring like a madman and sparking Linsanity. Leong, a sixth-generation Chinese American and San Francisco native, heard about the Palo Alto native when he was playing basketball at Harvard. Leong, an MTV producer, caught by Lin's story and ability to dunk, wanted to make a documentary about the Asian-American basketball star, but Lin needed some convincing. Finally, when Lin was playing for the Golden State Warriors, he agreed, giving Leong access to his home videos as well as to his family and friends. Lin was struggling after getting cut from the Warriors and then the Houston Rockets, just as Leong was to get interest in his documentary. Then Linsanity hit, and the documentary got as hot as its subject, playing at Sundance where it was an audience favorite, and opening at San Francisco's CAAMfest, the first documentary to do so in more than 10 years.

BEST PLACE FOR 40SOMETHINGS TO FIND LOVE

MARINA BLVD. SAFEWAY

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The script for finding love can grow stale. Prowling the bars can eventually feel like a juvenile exercise and trolling online dating sites can eventually feel forced. By a certain age, the whole process may seem more hassle than social, especially as the climb up the professional mountain hogs the evenings and weekends. Enter the Safeway in the Marina. A place of serendipity, comfort, and check-out lines. Where spontaneous interaction on a Tuesday night or Sunday afternoon can feel like fate. Where fellow cart-pushers are almost certainly gainfully employed, and quite possibly affluent. Where the smell of the Bay and the sight of the Golden Gate Bridge offer romantic, yet subtle, tone-setters. Keep your eyes peeled, don't press, and go ahead and ask that fine man/woman over in the dairy section what kind of cheese is best for carbonara.

BEST ACTUAL CIRCUS PERFORMER IN A DRAMATIC ROLE

BEN JOHNSON AS LUCKY IN MARIN THEATRE COMPANY'S *WAITING FOR GODOT*

As Samuel Beckett's slave character, the Ringling Bros.-trained performer made every breath have the force of a locomotive lurching forward. In motion, he seemed to stretch and slacken his body. Johnson cleverly suggested that such is the weight of the world in this play; it makes man devolve from primate to serpent. Each time Johnson got up after being whipped down, standing and balancing was a discovery, as if he truly were new to the species. Yet when Johnson spoke (and in the entire play, he's only permitted to for a couple of minutes), he made one of drama's most famously absurd monologues sound downright sensible. He was an animated professor giving his favorite lecture. In one play, this performer's range encompassed much of human evolution.

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BEST ARTIST/ ACTIVIST WORKING WITH PRISONERS

RHODESSA JONES

The daughter of migrant workers, Rhodessa Jones has always been drawn to what she calls "outsider art." She found her calling in working with women on the inside, and Jones founded the Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women, doing theater and storytelling with women in prison. Jones went into prison to teach aerobics, but found the inmates resistant and lethargic. So, she started forming circles where the women could talk with one another about their lives. Jones herself did a one-woman show about her experiences in jail, *Big Butt Girls and Hard Headed Women*, which solidified her belief that art can transform. Along with performing with the female inmates of San Francisco, Jones has also gone to South Africa to work with women in prison and conducted workshops with the Women's HIV Program at UCSF Medical Center, putting on *Dancing with the Clown of Love* with them in 2010.

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WOODEN BENCHES ON MARKET AND JONES

Northwest corner of Market and Jones

You've come to the right place. This is Market Street and Jones Street, San Francisco's booming open-air black-market bazaar. Whaddya need? There's a guy wheeling around a bike, another holding a laptop wrapped in a paper bag. One man's got a picnic blanket covered in VHS tapes and ratty hats, and a woman's got a plastic bag full of DVDs of '90s action films. Hungry? That group of women has some food, from the pantry, piled inside their carts. Nervous? Ron the Cigarette Man will hand you a loosey for a buck. But there's more! There's the guy selling bus transfer passes and moist towelettes and there's the big fella hawking $4 bracelets and there's the man in the bright suit with a case full of watches. And, of course, there's the top earners, over there on the corner, the young men slanging the weed, and maybe even some pills if you ask the right ones. So whaddya need?

BEST BEARDED LADY

TRANGELA LANSBURY

Twitter.com/TrannyLansbury

They might be ostracized as singular freaks on Coney Island, but bearded lady competition has been stiff in San Francisco for decades. Just ask the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, long the standard bearers of fashionable facial hair. So it would have to take quite the striking beauty to divert from the default, but Trangela Lansbury has ingenue written all over her sparkly whiskers. Lansbury, who was born Diego Gomez, is more than just a pretty face, identifying as an Art Institute graduate, painter, illustrator, performance artist, lingerie designer, and actor, recently appearing in a Cockettes revival at the Hypnodrome called *Tinsel Tarts in a Hot Coma*. And she's not afraid to share her beauty tips, including posting makeup instructionals on YouTube.

Gil Riego Jr.

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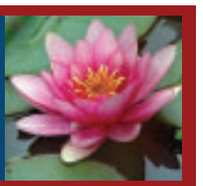

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BEST CLASSICAL THEATER MENTOR

L. PETER CALLENDER

When L. Peter Callender was asked to take over as artistic director for the African-American Shakespeare Company, he didn't hesitate. The company's mission — classics with color — was exactly what Callender wanted to do. The Trinidad-born actor and director trained at Julliard, and in London and Japan. He has performed almost 30 Shakespeare plays, most of Shaw, along with plenty of Ibsen and Oscar Wilde. At the African-American Shakespeare Company, he's adding American classics to the Shakespeare and fairy tales they already do. This year, he directed *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, delighted to give other actors of color the chance to find the joy he does in the words of Tennessee Williams.

BEST RINGMASTER OF BAY AREA THEATER

STUART BOUSEL

To say that producer, director, playwright, and occasional actor Stuart Bousel runs a three-ring circus would be an understatement. It's more like 20-ring. Whether taming rowdy bar audiences at SF Theater Pub or corralling the Greek gods at the SF Olympians festival, Bousel leads the indie theater scene with a jolly, leonine roar, a crackling wit, and graduate school-level preshow speeches. He's the kind of artist who gets an idea for a show one month and is producing it at the Exit Theatre or Custom Made the next. A no-holds-barred critic of theater-as-usual, he oversees and writes for a site, SFTheaterPub.WordPress.com, that's become the place theater artists go to see what the issues are.

BEST SVENGALI OF ANIMATION

BRENDAN HAY

This prolific writer ditched a sweet gig as headline producer at *The Daily Show* for the Best Coast, and he hasn't looked back. His writing credits include *The Simpsons*, and *Robot Chicken*, which earned him an Emmy nod in 2011. And before that power-hungry mouse outgrew the Presidio and invaded Skywalker Ranch in Marin, Hay was the head writer of Lucasfilm Animation's new comedy, *Star Wars Detours*. But there's no rest for the svengali of animation. His graphic novel, *Rascal Raccoon's Raging Revenge*, is in development at Warner Bros. He's boarding too many planes bound for meetings in Los Angeles of late, but he's deeply committed to the Bay Area — and its characters.

BEST AMATEUR HISTORIAN

WOODY LABOUNTY

WoodyLaBounty.com

The self-described "Big History Guy" — he is 6-foot-5 — is the executive director of the Western Neighborhoods Project and the keeper of the mesmerizing OutsideLands.org. If ever there were a more surefire way for a history-minded San Franciscan to blow an afternoon perusing amazing old photos and reading insightful essays than visiting this site, we haven't found it yet. LaBounty is also the author of Carville-by-the-Sea, a history of the days when folks lived in former streetcars at the city's westernmost edge. This, too, is a splendid way to while away the day time-traveling to a bygone age when people had the time to while away the day.

BEST "BELIEVE IT OR NOT" ATTRACTION

JARRETT JACK'S SNEAKER COLLECTION

There are people who like sneakers. Then there are sneakerheads. Then there are sneakerheads with lots of disposable income. And then there's Jarret Jack. When Jarrett Jack joined the Golden State Warriors, he brought with him to the Bay a raging inferno's worth of sneaker heat — more than 1,500 pairs of it. It is a collection impressive even by "MTV Cribs" standards. Cement III's, and Bred IV's, and Bin VII's, and Concord XI's, and pretty much every other relevant pair of Air Jordans. There are LeBrons, and Durants, and Kobes, and even some Nike Air Mags too. What a sight to behold! "He's worn a different pair of shoes every single day this year," teammate Steph Curry told the San Jose Mercury News. "I have not seen a shoe game like his."

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★ PEOPLE AND PLACES ★

BEST PLACE TO GET LOST

MILE ROCK BEACH, NEAR EAGLE'S POINT AT LANDS END

NPS.gov/GoGa/PlanYourVisit/LandsEnd.htm

It's easy to escape the urban hullabaloo. But with a little more effort on the Lands End hike — more than 100 stairs, to be precise — it's possible to find a place where on a foggy day not even Marin County across the water can be seen from a stretch of sand tucked in between cliffs west of the Golden Gate. Perhaps you'll see a few fishermen above on Eagle's Point, or some hardy tourists perched on a massive rock overlooking a lonely stretch of ocean. This is the beach spot for reflection and contemplation, not bonfires and braggadocio, and the escape is worth the long climb back to reality.

BEST AMATEUR POLITICAL THEATER

PUBLIC COMMENT AT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

When the sane people file out of the Tuesday night San Francisco Board of Supervisors meeting at City Hall, public comment begins and the real show starts. A bookish Gary Busey-type decries the "corporate rape" of the public library. A man who looks not unlike the Unabomber takes the microphone to deliver a freeform poem on "dictatorial democracy." The next guy up, who comes out each week to get musical about whatever is on his mind, sings his thoughts on equal pay for women. A smiley guy in a monkey T-shirt talks about overthrowing the government. San Francisco's eccentrics come out each week without fail for the chance to be barely listened to for two minutes by their city supervisors. It's the ultimate circus.

BEST PLACE TO CHECK OUT AN ALGAE CHANDELIER IN A SEISMICALLY RETROFIT PIER BUILDING

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Pier 15/17, S.F. 563-7337
Exploratorium.edu

Sure, phytoplankton can be pretty boring, what with being so incredibly small they're invisible to the naked eye. But when millions of them are stuffed together into gorgeous,

BEST STILT-WALKING PEOPLE-PAINTER

AUDETTE SOPHIA AND CATALYST ARTS

AudetteSophia.com
CatalystArts.com

You may not know art — but you will when you become it. The transformation from ho-hum existing flesh to living canvas is the art of multidisciplinary performer Audette Sophia. Business functions become forms of expression when her face and body-painting skills are applied to otherwise mundane operations, and no event or gala is forgettable when her stilt-walking, fire-dancing troupe comes to mark the occasion. From head-to-toe and child to adult, the entire body is the available canvas, with private events bookable at her North Oakland studio. But why rob the public and yourself of the opportunity to showcase yourself? Spice up your existence, and become art.

Michael Starghill

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illuminated overhead tanks, you'll take a bigger interest in the things. The brand new incarnation of Frank Oppenheimer's 44-year-old Exploratorium on Piers 15-17 boasts 600-plus exhibits and installations, including notable favorites like the Fog Bridge, the Toilet Drinking Fountain, and the Tree Experience, which shows off the split-open remains of a 250-year-old Douglas Fir. Oh yeah, and an algae chandelier. Yay, science!

BEST POTENTIALLY PLAUSIBLE BURIED TREASURE STORY

THE GRECIAN STATUES AT SUTRO HEIGHTS PARK

48th and Los Lobos Avenues

A Gold Rush entrepreneur and a Gilded Age builder (who built a private Muni), Adolph Sutro is responsible for shaping much of the city's west side — and there may yet be some evidence buried beneath the footpaths where his clifftop mansion once stood. Fine classical-inspired Adonises, Artemises and others — copies of the originals seen in Europe — lined the parapet of Sutro's manse. But now all but two are gone. Legend says they were removed during World War II to discourage Japanese gunners and then buried in the sod overlooking the Pacific ... except nobody remembers exactly where. Government digs have unearthed some fragments, but check the dense foliage. There just might be a classical head hidden in the bush.

BEST REASON THEY CALL IT TELEGRAPH HILL

MONUMENT TO GUGLIELMO MARCONI

Lombard and Kearny streets

The man who revolutionized communication never knew an iPhone and never saw the Internet. The inventor of wireless now has a quiet corner of Telegraph Hill (named for semaphore as in flag-waving, not wireless), with tidy landscaping and an Art Deco-era monument all to himself. The modest stone bench by artist Attilio Piccirilli may seem inadequate, especially considering the other edifices around town built in honor of men and women. Yet, keeping in mind that there would be no Sutro Tower if not for Marconi is more than enough gravitas as you Instagram a shot of this quiet, stately corner overlooking the bay.

BEST HOUSING METAPHOR

Erica Reh, Richmondsfblog.com

GOLDEN GATE PARK'S TINY DOOR–IN–A–TREE

Spring revealed yet another of life's mysteries as a mysterious, tiny door, expertly crafted, appeared in a tree in Golden Gate Park's Concourse. Whether art project or public statement or another sad escapee from UCSF's Super-Intelligent Squirrel Development Lab, the door attracted national attention before it got filled with trash, at which point the city intervened, citing (as always) some permitting thing. Officials removed the door, which caused a public outcry. The city then re-installed another door, this one far inferior in craftsmanship, which means that most likely the mysterious little portal is now marking the city's continuing weirdness on some Rec and Park desk.

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BEST SEX EDUCATORS

Violet Blue

Samantha Wolov

BY CLARISSE THORN

Interested in sex? You're in luck, because you live in the sex education capital of the USA. There are so many sex educators crammed into San Francisco that we couldn't possibly call anyone the "best." But below, you're invited to discover five sexy teachers who give real good ed.

PROSTATE PLAYER

Charlie Glickman
CharlieGlickman.com

One of the best sex and gender blogs on the Internet belongs to Dr. Charlie Glickman, who spent 16 years at feminist sex toy store Good Vibrations. Now, Charlie writes and teaches full time, with a brand-new book on prostate pleasure.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIST

Dossie Easton
DossieEaston.com

Starting with world-renowned polyamory book *The Ethical Slut*, Dossie Easton and her partner have written six famous books on BDSM and tantra. Now, Dossie offers single and/or couples therapy for all sexes, genders, relationship orientations, and spiritual travelers.

PERFORMANCE BONDAGE

Midori
PlanetMidori.com

She began her career in the U.S. military, and now she's a bondage teacher. Coincidence? Perhaps not. Midori, who was born in Japan, specializes in teaching BDSM — especially rope usage. She also creates performance art that showcases her bondage skills.

CUDDLES AND FIGHTS

Reid Mihalko
ReidAboutSex.com

Ever hear about Cuddle Party — where participants learn about touch in a specifically non-sexual way? The workshop was invented by Reid Mihalko, who also has a history in martial arts. His years as a lecturer and actor prepared him well to teach about sex & relationships.

TECH SEX

Violet Blue
TinyNibbles.com

Although she has written about all kinds of topics in sexuality, controversial commentator Violet Blue is most famous for her tech coverage. The former SF Gate columnist loves discussing free speech on the Internet, hackers and sex, and the best-designed new sex toys.

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AUDETTE SOPHIA

PAGE 18

BEST GIANT
MADISON BUMGARNER

There's a superlative young star on the San Francisco Giants. A multitool player who can win a game with his bat, glove, or arm and is the reigning National League MVP. But Buster Posey won in our magazine last year, so we're giving this one to the team's transcendent young starter, Madison Bumgarner. The dominant young lefty shook off a late-season funk with a dominant World Series start last year, and he hasn't looked back. Thus far in the Giants' young season, he's been their de-facto staff ace and a strikeout machine. He's the man you want on the mound — pitching to Buster.

BEST 49ER
COLIN KAEPERNICK

Colin Kaepernick led the San Francisco 49ers to the Super Bowl less than four months after starting his first professional game. The face of the new breed of NFL quarterbacks, he confounded defenses with his rare mix of physical prowess and mental dexterity. He's as big as the defensive ends trying to tackle him, smarter than the linebackers trying to figure out his fakes, and faster than the defensive backs trying to chase him down in the open field. He also has one of the strongest throwing arms in the NFL and the accuracy to hit a receiver's hands from 40 yards away. And he does it all with the swagger of a rapper on stage and the joy of a grade-schooler on the jungle gym.

BEST COACH
JIM HARBAUGH

There is no shortage of coaching talent in the Bay Area. Bruce Bochy won his second championship in three years and Mark Jackson turned a young team with an offensive reputation into a hard-nosed and savvy contender that won hearts on an unexpected playoff run. But this year belonged to Jim Harbaugh, the man with the balls to bench the quarterback who led the 49ers to the NFC Championship game for one who had never before started in the pros. But it wasn't just courage that took the Niners to the Super Bowl, it was Harbaugh's ability to mold an offensive game plan that maximized Colin Kaepernick's unique and potent skill-set. Now let's see what the duo can do with a full off-season to work with.

BEST WARRIOR
STEPHEN CURRY

Ttthhhhrrreeeeeee...rrraaaaaaahhhhh! There is no sound in sports like the Oracle Arena roar when Steph Curry catches fire. It is a perfect marriage of player and city. Each three-point shot turns the crowd up another notch, until it seems the people can go no louder and then there goes another swoosh and it's like God turned on another speaker. Curry became a superstar during this season's playoff run — a *Sports Illustrated* cover boy emerging as the most exciting player in the NBA. He is one of the best shooters in basketball history and he can also break ankles and drop dimes like a Rucker Park Legend. He can shake a man in a phone booth, and barely needs any space to release his shot. He can slash into the pain at will, floating graceful finger rolls over seven-footers' outstretched arms. And when he hits one of his shooting streaks, the cheering starts before the ball even begins its descent into the net.

BEST BOXER
NONITO DONAIRE

It was a banner year for Bay Area boxing. Andre Ward beat the bigger Chad Dawson to establish himself as one of the three best fighters in the world. Robert Guerrero won a vicious brawl with Andre Berto to earn a mega-fight with Floyd Mayweather Jr. And boxing writers named Virgil Hunter the 2012 Trainer of the Year. It was Nonito Donaire, though, who put together the most impressive stretch. Over 10 months, the Filipino Flash ripped through four of the best fighters in the 126-pound division, capping it off with a one-punch knockout of Jorge Arce in December. He took home the 2012 Fighter of the Year award. Though he lost a unanimous decision to the talented Guillermo Rigondeaux in April, Donaire's career trajectory remains on the incline. And his left hook remains one of the most feared punches in the fight game.

BEST CHEERLEADER IN UNIFORM
KENT BAZEMORE

Even some of the most dedicated Warriors fans didn't know his name at first. But they did know his face. How could you not? Anyone watching an early season Dubs game saw the man conducting some of the most creative and passionate celebrations ever known to rock an NBA bench. He'd kneel down and shoot into the air three fingers from an outstretched arm when Klay Thompson hit a three-pointer. He'd jump back in mock disbelief when Harrison Barnes slammed in a ferocious dunk. He'd exaggeratedly stomp his feet and wave his towel when Steph Curry dropped in a circus layup. His name, it turned out, was Kent Bazemore. And the rookie's energy was so contagious that by mid-season, the Warriors bench looked like the kind you only see in March Madness.

BEST HILL-FREE JOGGING ROUTE
THE EMBARCADERO

San Francisco is a beautiful city with many beautiful jogging routes passing beautiful sights. But sometimes you just wanna ratchet the incline-setting down a notch, because it's hard to appreciate that scenery when you're hunched over in front of a parked car throwing up yesterday's lunch. The Embarcadero offers the beauty — the bridge, the bay, the breeze, the sun — and a nice flat path. There are added diversions as well: staring annoyingly at Fisherman's Wharf tourists blocking the sidewalk as they try to Yelp a nearby Chinese restaurant;

READERS POLL WINNERS

BEST BIKE SHOP
VALENCIA CYCLERY

BEST BOOTCAMP
BOOTCAMPSF, KOI FITNESS (TIE)

BEST GOLF COURSE
TPC HARDING PARK

BEST GYM
THE BAR METHOD

BEST DOG PARK
DUBOCE PARK

BEST HIKE
LAND'S END

BEST PARK
GOLDEN GATE PARK

BEST ATHLETE
BUSTER POSEY

BEST TEAM
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

BEST YOGA STUDIO
YOGA TREE

BEST BIKE PATH
THE WIGGLE

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SF FIREFIGHTERS LOCAL 798
TOY PROGRAM

Going to 4/20 at Hippie Hill dressed like a blunt seemed like a great idea — until some stoner lit Lady Swisher on fire.

Gil Riego Jr.

The Electric Run at Candlestick Park offered event-goers the opportunity to perspire into nice clothes like these.

Gil Riego Jr.

Hey, throwing pillows at strangers at a big pillow fight at Justin Herman Plaza on Valentine's Day is better than ordering takeout alone.

Gil Riego Jr.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BEST MOMENTS IN S.F. SPORTS

Angry Birds, Star Wars, and long-distance running merge at Bay to Breakers.

Godofredo Vasquez/Special to the *SFExaminer*

One cool thing about living in pricey S.F. is all the free events, like this sumo competition in Japantown.

Gil Riego Jr.

smugly grinning at the stuffed patrons waddling out of the Ferry Building; weaving around the orange and black masses filtering into the ballpark. And if you do still need to puke, there's always McCovey Cove.

BEST PLACE TO STARE AT THE CITY'S BEAUTY WHILE SMOKING A JOINT

ALAMO SQUARE PARK

Once in a while, you just gotta sit back, light up, and savor the city's aesthetic prowess. And it's almost as if God created Alamo Square Park for this specific purpose. From the top of the park's lush, green hill, the city feels satisfyingly intimate. You can plop down on the eastern slope — where it's vibrant, sunny, and dotted with people sipping wine on picnic blankets — and take in one of the region's legendary vistas: the Painted Ladies in the foreground with downtown's skyscrapers gleaming on the horizon. Or, for more seclusion, you can kick back on the west side and observe the city's contours, with landmarks defined by their geographic location — on a hill, in a valley — instead of by the street signs and intersections of modernity. You can see how close everything really is — or at least seems to be — and realize that our perception of distance is defined by the control that highways and stoplights and bus schedules have over our notion of urban travel. Or you can just lay down on the grass, put on some Tribe Called Quest on the iPod, and stare at those elegant and haunting Victorians. And let the mind wander.

BEST FREE SPORTING SPECTACLE

THE AMERICA'S CUP

AmericasCup.com

Lord knows the America's Cup got 99 problems. But seeing the forthcoming races free of charge ain't one. Sure, you could pay for elite seating in the grandstands, or drop a king's ransom and rent a 12-bedroom manse overlooking Alcatraz and the Golden Gate. But most of us will just pack a lunch, bring our dog, and take in the races from along the waterfront (assuming, of course, that the troubled event manages to manifest itself). Yacht racing may rank somewhere below football, baseball, basketball, hockey, roller hockey, field hockey, and table hockey on Americans' radar. But it's gonna be big. It's gonna be free. It's the America's Cup.

BEST MARATHON SPORTING DEVELOPMENT BATTLE

BEACH CHALET SOCCER FIELDS

1400-1598 John F. Kennedy Dr.

After five years of wrangling and approval by four city agencies, the state's Coastal Commission finally approved proposed Astroturf fields under 60-foot light towers on the far west of Golden Gate Park. It was a long and odd road; a city document actually argued that the turf-and-lights plan was best because the area had fallen prey to "undesirable uses such as camping and sexual activity." Turf opponents claimed that artificial grass conflicted with the natural state of a park created atop rolling sand dunes. Barring legal redress, the turf and lights are coming. Whether the camping and sex go away remains to be seen.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE SMALL KIDS ON A BIKE RIDE

OCEAN BEACH PROMENADE

There are only four reasons to ride a bike on the sidewalk in San Francisco: 1. You're uncomfortable riding a bike in San Francisco; 2. You're drunk; 3. You're a

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AP Photo/Tony Avelar

BEST CONVERGENCE OF TALENT

BY ALBERT SAMAHA

There is a certain ecstasy only experienced through sports. It is an ecstasy of losing yourself in the present, every sense attuned and aligned to the rush of adrenaline and joy. It is an ecstasy that blooms only under the proper conditions: a lingering anticipation, oscillating between fear and hope, building drama and drawing prayers with much at stake, and generating a deep wanting ... and then Pablo Sandoval hits his third home run or Colin Kaepernick races past the Packers defense for a touchdown or Steph Curry steals the ball from Ty Lawson and drains a 25-foot three-pointer.

We've been blessed here in the Bay. Our time has come. We had a long, cold sports winter, which first hit in Game Six of the 2002 World Series then raged on through Super Bowl XXXVII and nearly a decade of athletic irrelevance. But the sun came out in October 2010. And now we're in the midst of The Bay Area Sports Renaissance.

Over the span of a single school year, we've had playoff runs in each of the four major sports. Hard to remember the last time the Muni buses didn't have Go Giants! or Go 49ers! or Go Warriors! on the destination sign. It's been a nine-month bender — of cheering, sleeping, drinking, rinsing, and repeating. Oh, the memories. Matt Cain's perfect game. Buster Posey's grand slam. Sergio Romo's strikeout. Frank Gore's touchdown in the NFC Championship game. Andrew Bogut posterizing Javale McGee. Klay Thomspon hitting a one-handed runner to send Game 4 into overtime.

And that's just the team sports. Local boxers Nonito Donaire, Andre Ward, and Robert Guerrero have matched the magic — all three beginning the year on most lists ranking the Top 10 pound-for-pound fighters in the world.

Sure, there's been pain. It's part of the sports fan's tradeoff, the downside of the emotional investment. But, through these festive days, the long arc of Bay Area fandom has bent toward celebration.

These things come in cycles. But sports are not meant to be enjoyed in the future tense. They are best consumed and appreciated in the moment. These are good times, friends, to embrace and to savor.

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kid; 4. You're chaperoning a kid. The first two reasons aren't good. But the last two aren't bad. And there's no better place day-in and day-out to pedal along with the wee ones than the flat, forgiving terrain of the Ocean Beach promenade.

BEST STADIUM MUSICAL TRADITION

"LIGHTS" BY JOURNEY PLAYING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTH INNING WHEN THE GIANTS ARE WINNING AND "DON'T STOP BELIEVING" WHEN THE TEAM IS TIED OR LOSING

It's the middle of the eighth inning at AT&T Park and the Giants are winning. The night is cool, the air is crisp, and crowd is at peace. The guitar strums over the stadium speakers. The video screen pans the Golden Gate Bridge. The patrons lean back in their chairs, let loose a satisfied smile, and reflect. When the lights go dooowwwnn ... It's a good time to be living in San Francisco. Economy's not doing too bad. And the sun shines ooonnn the baaayyyyy ... Social movements — from gay rights to information freedom to marijuana legalization — are chugging along. And the city's sits at the heart of the era's defining industry. Not to mention, the sports teams are killing it. Do I wanna be theerrree, in myyy cittt-aaayyy ... So of course everybody is singing along. Ohh, Ohhhh, Ohhhhh ...

BEST PUBLIC BATHROOMS

LOWER GREAT HIGHWAY PUBLIC CONVENIENCE STATIONS

Lower Great Highway at Judah, Taraval and other streets

They don't build 'em like they used to. Case in point: Nobody is suggesting fine black-and-white tiling, solid stonework, and Greek-inspired columns for public bathrooms anymore. Then again, nobody uses "public convenience station" when "restroom" will do. And it's too bad. A trip down to the surf is always better without the need to jump into a wetsuit and paddle past the break in order to relieve oneself. Even the perhaps-predictable population of street people treat these spacious houses of holy functions with (a modicum of) respect. Take that, JC Decaux.

BEST HIKE TO RUINS OF AN ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY

SUMMIT OF STRAWBERRY HILL, GOLDEN GATE PARK

You won't find strawberries atop Strawberry Hill anymore. Nor will you find the Sweeny Observatory, a grand, castle-like structure erected in 1891. Sepia-toned photos reveal a wondrous, circular structure sprouting atop the hill and reflected in Stow Lake. In fact, the bridges on the north and south of the lake were constructed to provide access to the observatory. Those bridges appear to have fared better in the 1906 quake than the structure inspiring their creation; the observatory toppled like dominoes. But high atop the hill, you can still see its red brick, circular foundation. A massive evergreen now grows where 19th century folk once stargazed.

BEST PLACE TO (ILLICITLY) GET HIGH

SF ART INSTITUTE'S ROOF DECK

800 Chestnut

The koi pond and Diego Rivera fresco are all well and good, but the view of the Bay and Coit Tower from the top of SFAI's concrete vista over the Chestnut Street campus's plaza has made this a not-so-secret favorite spot for decades of, um, artistic types to gather and ponder the, um, finer chemicals in life. It's easy to pretend you're in Firenze or Madrid as you wander around the campus's plaza and listen to the fountain as students scurry around toting portfolio cases. The roof deck has two levels that become obvious once you ascend. On your way back down, see what's on display at the school's galleries with your renewed focus.

BEST WORKOUT BEFORE DRINKING

CLIMBING THE HILL TO GET TO 15 ROMOLO

15 Romolo, 398-1359

15romolo.com

The fast-paced, on-the-go lifestyle of a San Francisco young professional can leave little time for a good workout. Which means the dark clouds of guilt hang over the after-work

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rounds of drinks. Not to worry. An excursion to 15 Romolo ensures a conscience-clear night. The delightfully creaky North Beach watering hole is hard to find and harder to reach. It sits in an alley — or rather up an alley. Because between where you stand on Broadway and the bar's door, there's a steep, half-block march up a hill. Lean forward, pump the arms, keep breathing, and feel the burn. Then get yourself a refreshing cocktail. You earned it.

BEST WAY TO SEE THE MISSION BEFORE IT'S ANNEXED BY GOOGLE

SCOUT FOR STREET ART WALKING TOUR

Vayable.com

Russell Howze describes his tour as a "three hour zigzag through the Mission District." For fans of street art, or anyone curious about the changing city, it's a zigzag worth taking. Howze has been chronicling the stencils, tags, murals, and graffiti that decorate San Francisco for 15 years, and is the author of the street art tome *Stencil Nation*. His tour explores alleys that will be new to residents and tourists alike, and keeps an eye on the shifting cultural tides of the neighborhood. "Urban landscapes are always changing," Howze says, pointing out that, while many of the tech workers moving into the Mission appreciate street art, they also bring security cameras and fences.

BEST WAY TO LEARN

SKILLSHARE

skillshare.com

This educational start-up offers peer-to-peer learning through a weekly e-mail list of available classes. Just sign up and select from courses in design, crafts, entrepreneurship, and more. Classes are taught by anyone who has a skill they'd like to share (if you're a master at handstands, perhaps, or paper-crane making, or JavaScript, think of this as your chance to pass the baton to the next generation), and are filled with students from around the Bay. Learn or teach a new skill and meet new friends — all for less money than you'd have spent at the bar.

BEST CRITICAL MASS ALTERNATIVE

S.F. BIKE PARTY

sfbikeparty.wordpress.com

Sometimes it's not about the politics — it's about the party. It's about rolling out with a few dozen of your new best friends and enjoying yourself and everyone else, while not blocking traffic or otherwise contributing to the ongoing war between cyclists and motorists. So leave the angst of the fossil-fuel bubble at home, take heed of the theme of the month, and let the bicycle bells ring at the mobile disco that is the S.F. Bicycle Party. Stopping at red lights and riding all the way to the right along the planned route is mandatory — as is the occasional dance and socializing break. All are welcome; the only barrier for entry is two wheels and a jones for partying.

BEST $10 BICYCLES

SAN FRANCISCO YELLOW BIKE PROJECT

25 Division Street
www.sfyellowbike.org

At the end of the day — and at the beginning of the commute hour, and during the grocery shopping time — it's about numbers, as in how many people are out on bicycles. That's why anyone is welcome and free to take their rig to the volunteer-run shop on Division Street — and why anyone with $10 can buy a volunteer-assembled rig from donated parts. A small donation covers the time required to show you how to adjust your own brakes and get you back on the road safely. If you have no bicycle knowledge, rejoice: You are an ideal volunteer, and eligible for free instruction in repair and maintenance.

BEST PLACE TO WATCH A SUNSET OVER THE OCEAN

GRAND VIEW PARK

sfrecpark.org/destination/grand-view-park

Watching the sun set over the ocean is a definite perk of living on the West Coast, and there are dozens of places to take in the sight, including the Ocean Beach promenade and Sutro Heights Park. But for an even more spectacular, panoramic view, a little climb of some stairs brings a big payoff. The aptly-name Grand View Park in the Sunset allows for 360-degree views of the city, and a wide-open view of the sun's descent over the Pacific. A bonus is the mosaic stairs that lead up to the hill from Noriega Street and 16th Avenue, which are nearly worth a trip just to see in themselves.

BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO 2013

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BEST WAYS TO LEARN TO FLY

BY DEVIN HOLT

This year's Best Of is a kind of a tease, all the lithe and beautiful circus people displaying their physical genius across our pages. And here's you wondering how you can get yourself twisted, or hang from ribbons, or fly through the air. Here, then, the first steps of running away to the circus.

Circus Center

Bizarre the Film

BEST VALUE FOR FLIPS, TRICKS, AND TRAPEZE

CIRCUS CENTER

755 Frederick, 759-8123
CircusCenter.org

The last few years have been tough for the S.F. Circus Center. There were leadership changes, a mysterious closure, and a surge in competition from other schools (some run by alumni). But the organization that spawned the Bay Area's flourishing circus scene isn't going away. They're firing back with a value package unmet by the upstart schools. The new unlimited program allows students to pay $155-$199 per month and train as often as they like. It's not totally unlimited: Students can take up to two classes per day, for a maximum of 50 per month, and a few classes have wait lists. But with classes seven days a week, and teachers like Mr. Lu Yi of the famed Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe on staff, it's still the best deal under the big top.

BEST PLACE TO MAKE YOUR CIRCUS DREAMS COME TRUE

SONS OF CAYUGA

915 Cayuga Ave.
SonsOfCayuga.info

Sons of Cayuga has only been open for a few years, but it's already made a reputation as the circus gym by, for, and about performers. Members of the Sardine Family Circus, Vau-de-Vire Society, and various other circus-folk train on the mats regularly, and the school's Pretty Lights series of improvisational circus shows was featured on *SF Weekly*'s Exhibitionist blog last fall. There are general fitness classes and world-class acrobatic instruction here, but what really sets Cayuga apart is its welcoming attitude, and DIY approach to circus training. Whether your goal is circus stardom or merely a flatter tummy, Cayuga can help.

BEST SCHOOL FOR TEENS, TWEENS, AND TODDLERS

ACROSPORTS

639 Frederick St., 665-2276
AcroSports.org

AcroSports has classes in gymnastics, tumbling, parkour, and circus arts for all ages, but where it really shines is its kids classes. The summer camps begin in June, and teach children as young as 4, with aftercare available for certain age groups. And beyond toddlers, AcroSports is at the cutting edge of another youth-influenced movement in Bay Area circus: urban circus arts. Its in-house program, City Circus, produces an annual show that combines break-dancing, hip-hop, and circus arts.

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TO

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★ FEATURED PERFORMERS ★

VAU-DE-VIRE SOCIETY

PAGE 38

BEST PLACE FOR CARNIVAL GAMES

MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE

Pier 45 Shed A, 346-2000
MuseeMecaniqueSF.com

Try your luck at San Francisco's best midway, the Musée Mécanique, a collection of more than 300 vintage coin-operated arcade games. Admission is free, so step right up and pay a nickel (times five) to fire up the old favorites like Arm Wrestling, have your destiny revealed by the Fortune Teller, or take snapshots in the photo booth. Our favorites are Susie the Can-Can Dancer, Laffing Sal, and, of course, the Carnival. Founder Edward Galland Zelinsky began collecting the unique pieces at the age of 11 and his son Dan now runs the museum. A visit to the Musée Mécanique will really take you back to Playland at the turn of the century.

READERS POLL WINNERS

BEST BAND
THE SAM CHASE

BEST BLOG
SFIST

BEST COMEDIAN
ALICIA DATNER

DANCE COMPANY
ODC

BEST DJ
CHEB I SABBAH

BEST GALLERY
111 MINNA

BEST MUSEUM
DE YOUNG

BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL
HARDY STRICTLY BLUEGRASS

BEST MC
BAMBU, DONNA SACHET, KINGFISH
(THREE-WAY TIE)

BEST SUNDAY FUNDAY
DOLORES PARK

BEST THEATER
A.C.T.

BEST WRITER
DAVE EGGERS

BEST PUBLISHER

MCSWEENEY'S

McSweeneys.net

Perhaps the only West Coast publisher playing a pivotal role in the American literary scene, McSweeney's has a catalog that lacks the fashionable, impetuous hardcovers that clutter most lists. It's definitely pushing boundaries — with dos-a-dos children's books and Beck's *Song Reader* — but it's not doing it in the name of publicity. Readers know they can count on form and content from established writers, including Michael Chabon and Joyce Carol Oates, and can also discover worthy new talent. Writer Dave Eggers's small, full-service empire also includes *Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *Internet Tendency*, *The Believer*, *Lucky Peach*, *Grantland*, and *Wolphin*, but the heart of the organization can be found at 826 Valencia, a nonprofit organization dedicated to tutoring students ages 6 to 18 in the literary arts.

BEST ARCHIVE FULL OF TRICKS

SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER

100 Larkin, 557-4400
SFPLI.org

Heat rises, and so does the quality of materials at the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library. The San Francisco History Center is tucked behind closed but not locked doors on the sixth floor, where the entirety of the city and county archives live. The research collection includes police records on prostitutes and pickpockets of the Barbary Coast, aerial views taken in 1938, 19th century menus, more than 10,000 postcards, 600 broadsides, sheet music from 1847, and "pocket lawyers" circulated throughout the LGBT community during the 1960s. They have ephemera related to everything from fortune cookies to the Zodiac killer, but unlike most archives, you don't need a Ph.D. to request materials — just a good ol' library card.

BEST FORTUNE-TELLING SHOW

ASK DR. HAL AT THE DARK ROOM

2263 Mission, 401-7987
AskDrHal.com

After years of bouncing around among venues such as the Odeon, S.P.A.C.E., and 12 Galaxies, the venerable Ask Dr. Hal show has found a new home at the equally venerable Dark Room. Accompanied by strange sounds and visuals, the Church of the SubGenius's astonishing orator Dr. Hal will answer any question posed to him, and will do so in the most entertainingly purple, poetic, and potentially profound manner possible. The more money you include with your question, the funnier his answer will be, and a twenty will get you a "bardic recitation" — an amazing, on-the-spot response in full verse. Ask early and often!

BEST AUDIO THREE-RING CIRCUS

RADIO VALENCIA

87.9FM, RadioValencia.fm
962-7979

Of all the community radio options in the Bay Area, Radio Valencia in San Francisco is the best value for your free radio-listening dollar. As is appropriate for a station whose studio is above a Bikram Yoga joint in the Mission, Radio Valencia offers a wide range of bizarre aural spectacles, particularly the free-form Nose Hair Lint Gland and KrOB's mind-bending Stimulus Regression Programming. Such shows will leave you with more questions than when you started, questions you can then call in to the radio version of Ask Dr. Hal. Radio Valencia: Full-service sound for your brain.

BEST SCREENING ROOM WITH A (NO-TOUCHING) PETTING ZOO

VARIETY CLUB PREVIEW ROOM

582 Market, 781-3894
VarietyNC.org

The next time you need a 47-seat state-of-the-art venue in which to watch a movie or sporting event on a theater-quality screen, the Variety Club Preview Room is your best bet. (After the screening, pretend you're an old-timey movie mogul by turning around saying "Can you run that again, Charlie?") Making it all the more special is the lush reception lounge, which is lined with colorful oil portraits of lions, giraffes, and other animals, leading to a bigger-than-life Kung Fu Panda statue. You're not allowed to touch any of them, of course, but it's comforting to know they're there.

BEST LATE-NIGHT MOVIE

FILM NIGHT IN THE PARK

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FilmNight.org

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WELCOME TO THE CIRCUS CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BY DEVIN HOLT

San Francisco is ground zero for circus arts in the U.S. Our favorite rival, New York City, only has one legit school. Even that Hollywood of circus towns to the north, Montreal, has felt our influence. One of its favorite companies, Les 7 doigts de la main (The 7 fingers of the hand), was started by members of the San Francisco-based Pickle Family Circus.

And the San Francisco circus scene keeps growing. From the sexy go-go vibe of Vau-de-Vire Society to the family-friendly park shows of Circus Bella, there's never been a better time to catch a show, or swing on a trapeze, in the City by the Bay. Here are our top picks for the circuses of San Francisco.

BEST JOB OF FILLING BIG CLOWN SHOES

CIRCUS BELLA

CircusBella.com

The Pickle Family Circus is San Francisco's most enduring circus legacy. It "reinvented the circus" long before that phrase was a buzzword in the circus community, and its one-ring, animal-free show helped inspire the two street performers who founded Cirque du Soleil. The Pickles started in 1970s San Francisco, and reflected the times. Their shows were held in public parks, and always benefitted a good cause. They opened the San Francisco School of Circus Arts in 1984 (now Circus Center), which led to the extensive circus scene we have today. The Pickle Family Circus disbanded, but Circus Bella has picked up where it left off. The troupe performs free shows in public parks, with an emphasis on traditional (but animal-free) circus. And it partners with Oakland's after-school program, Prescott Circus Theatre, to help teach the circus stars of tomorrow. It even resurrected the Pickle's famous "big juggle" routine.

BEST CIRCUS THEATER

SWEET CAN

SweetCanProductions.com

Sweet Can brings that Montreal circus flavor without overdoing it. Its shows take Cirque du Soleil-sized skills, and fit them into small, intimate venues. The company is not as busy as some other local circus troupes — it takes its time developing new work — but its shows typically sell out. Sweet Can's first show *Habitat*, and its second show *Yes Sweet Can*, were both extended beyond their initial run, and its latest holiday cabaret, *Mittens and Mistletoe*, charmed the audiences and critics alike in the Dance Mission theater.

Gil Riego Jr.

BEST-LOOKING SHOW ON EARTH

VAU–DE–VIRE SOCIETY

VauDeViresociety.com

Vau-de-Vire might have started out with a reputation as a ragtag circus bad boy, but thanks to constant practice, and the sheer determination of director Mike Gaines, the group is now a force to be reckoned with. Its revealing costumes blur the line between circus performers and go-go dancers, but its skills have landed it on the Las Vegas strip. This year, Vau-de-Vire helped take over the lease of the former art center CELLspace when it fell on hard times, and turned the place into its personal circus palace, Inner Mission.

BEST WAY TO PASS THE TIME WHEN DRAGGED TO FISHERMAN'S WHARF BY OUT-OF-TOWNERS

THE SARDINE FAMILY CIRCUS

Piers 39 and 41
Facebook.com/SardineFamilyCircus

The Bush Man might get all the press, but of all the groups performing at the Wharf, none can match the wit, athleticism, and sheer hilarity of the Sardine Family Circus. Born to a circus family in the U.K., Alex, Orion, and Meisje Griffiths grew up performing on the streets, and it shows. They've added and lost some members over the years — Orion is on sabbatical for a turn on Broadway — but the show hasn't missed a step. Their juggling, acrobatics, and ridiculous antics off of a 6-foot unicycle will have jaded San Franciscans and underdressed tourists cracking up in no time.

Frank Gaglione

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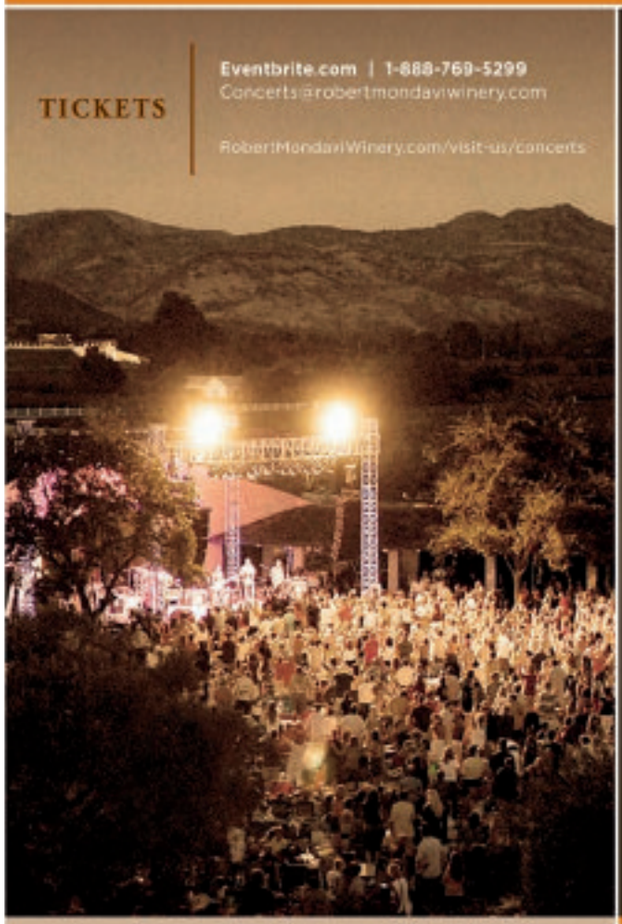

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JULY 13TH

BRUCE HORNSBY AND THE NOISEMAKERS
Spotlight on Oakville

JULY 13TH

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Please enjoy our wines responsibly. ©2013 Robert Mondavi Winery, Oakville, CA

pretty much over, for people nostalgic for the carnival experience, Film Night in the Park is the next best thing. If you're a sucker for a summertime show, you can see entertaining film classics at Dolores Park where admission is free. The programming features action flicks like *Jaws* and *Top Gun*, or feel-good throwbacks including *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club* on a big screen. For the forty-milers and newcomers to Film Night, we recommend that townies show up early and BYOB — that is, bring your own blanket.

BEST MUSEUM SIDESHOW
CARTOON ART MUSEUM

655 Mission, 277-8666
CartoonArt.org

Most San Francisco museums are big on heart and low on funds, such as the Cartoon Art Museum, which has absolutely no collections budget. On any given day, sole curator Andrew Farago can be seen managing the archives, planning shows, hosting readings, painting the exhibition halls, building cases, and mounting art. He might even be found manning the register at the museum's large, excellent bookstore. And yet, despite being spread so thin, it remains the preeminent cartoon museum in the country. When cartoonists visit the San Francisco Cartoon Art Museum, they do so not because they have to, but because it serves as a kind of occupational clubhouse. Against all odds, the museum's exhibitions are on constant rotation, and they delight novice and expert alike.

BEST ESCAPE ARTIST IN COMEDY
THE PURPLE ONION

PurpleOnionLive.com

This historic local "comedy club" has gone through several iterations since its founding in 1952, including a stint as a grunge music club in the '90s. It holds a special place in the hearts of the local comedy scene, and it can never die. Even when the building was sold late last year, signaling the inevitable demise of the club, the comics picked up the famous name and set up shop with The Purple Onion at Kells. Like alumni offering perennial donations to support the majesty of their alma mater and the value of their degree, San Francisco comedians keep the myth of The Purple Onion alive and bask in the prestige of performing on its stage — wherever that may be.

BEST CIRCUS GAME
CIRCUS ATARI

Atari.com/Mobile/CircusAtari

The circus has come to town — or at least to your mobile device. Circus Atari is the millennium's version of sideshow games: the digitized Barnum & Bailey. Compatible with iPhones and iPads, the latest version of Circus Atari has a four-star rating, not to mention it'll only cost you a couple clicks on your phone to play. You're the ringmaster of the biggest spec under the big top. Use the cannon to shoot the clown through the big ring. Doing well will unlock characters like the Convict Clown and the Hippie Clown. Collect coins and pop balloons for points in this charivari before this zanni needs to get back into his clown car.

BEST THEATRICAL FREAK SHOW
THE THRILLPEDDLERS

This is not some sideshow; the Thrillpeddlers are the main event. But their joyful, tasteless camp is subversive like the freak shows of yore. They titillate perverse urges; they indulge forbidden fantasies. They glitter their unmentionables and tassel their sexual organs. They specialize in grisly deaths with lakes of fake blood, grislier sex scenes, and, in a recent and highly successful departure from their canon, Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade*. Many of artistic director Russell Blackwood's performers are stars of S.F.'s drag and burlesque scenes; others gleefully adopt the glamour and performativity of those genres, reminding the rest of us that if you don't explode your rules once in a while, you're not truly alive.

BEST COMEDIC VARIETY SHOW
DON'T WATCH THIS SHOW LIVE!

SFSketchfest.com/x/Performers/Dont-Watch-This-Show-Live

Founded in 2012 by comedians Ryan Cronin and Bert DiVietri, Don't Watch This Show LIVE! is like *Saturday Night Live* meets Funny or Die meets a Wednesday night in a little theater in

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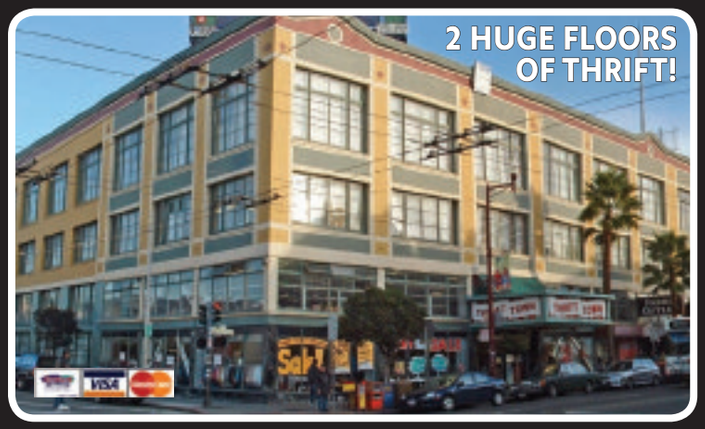

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BEST ROCK 'N' ROLL WHIPCRACKER

HETHER FORTUNE OF WAX IDOLS

Facebook.com/WaxIdols

BY IAN S. PORT

No one in the Bay Area music scene metes out painful pleasure, or pleasurable pain, like Heather Fedewa, aka Hether Fortune. She's best known as the leader of Wax Idols, an all-female rock band that explores the fine line between noirish pop and ear-shattering punk. But when she's not recording or touring, Fortune beats men for money as a professional dominatrix. It's an outlet for her long-running interest in the aesthetics of sadomasochism. And, as she discovered a few years ago, Fortune simply enjoys dispensing hurt. "I like the more theatrical and pain-based aspects of it," she says, explaining that while sex can be a part of a dominatrix's job, it isn't for her.

That taste for discomfort extends to Fortune's notoriously unguarded Twitter presence, where the 25-year-old Midwest transplant issues often-barbed missives about herself, other musicians, and more or less anyone she disagrees with. "So fuck Savages & the media horse they rode in on & fuck you if you can't see it," went one recent Tweet, referring to a new British band with which hers has lately been compared. "There. Have a nice day. Gonna go have hate sex now. Bye."

Her Twitter flaming also targets publications, like this one, that have sometimes issued negative critiques of her bands' shows. But whether you agree with her or disagree with her, it's difficult not to be fascinated by Fortune. She can come across as self-obsessed, maybe solipsistic. But in talking to her, one gets the sense that even her self-regard is utterly sincere. And in a music culture where so much seems posed, rehearsed, and edited, her unguarded persona, however flawed, feels refreshing. "I've always been very outspoken, I've always had a big mouth, and I'm not ashamed of that," she says. It gets her into trouble — but, as she sees it, "more often than not it's their problem, not mine."

This year, Fortune has been Tweeting about a lesser-known side of her personality: the romantic one. After a brief period of flirtation, mostly long-distance, she abruptly married Tim Gick of the goth-pop band TV Ghost last winter, in an impromptu ceremony at a Reno chapel. "It was actually really beautiful," she says of the wedding. "They have a drive-through option, which we didn't take, because my dress was too nice to not be seen fully." Viewed via the pinhole lens of Twitter, it almost seemed like Fortune's nuptials were some kind of prank, a mockery of traditional committed relationships. They weren't. "We're really in love," she says. "I've never been so happy."

Lest her new-found romance concern fans of Fortune's harder side, rest assured she's still very much the fire-breathing rock frontwoman. Wax Idols, Twitter, and her work as a dominatrix are outlets for a person fascinated by the relationship between pleasure and pain, and comfortable on either side of it. She's also articulate and understanding — if not exactly apologetic — about the targets of some of her rants, like concert reviewers from a certain San Francisco alt-weekly. "Nothing that I do is fake," she says, her blood rising. "If I throw a guitar, it's because I'm fucking pissed. And you don't have to like it, but don't accuse me of being phony."

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BEST S.F. COMICS TO WATCH IN 2013

BY DANA SITAR

From up-and-coming open-mikers to rookie pros, keep an eye out around town for these fast-rising stand-up stars.

BRENDAN LYNCH

An unassuming facade and unapologetic snark make Lynch a favorite at clubs and showcases around the Bay Area.

DAVID GBORIE

Gborie lights up the local open mic scene and deserves to be known for his talents beyond it. He explodes on stage with passion, frightening and igniting a captive audience with laughter.

Andrew Holmgren

MATT RATH

Rath's unique stand-up and stellar improv skills have him popping up on every local showcase, improv and sketch show in town.

ANNA SEREGINA

Seregina's quick wit, deep sarcasm, and no-holds-barred jabs at our beloved city make her a favorite at local shows and the Punch Line.

RYAN CRONIN

A highly underrated comedian, actor, and producer, Cronin boasts an air of sophistication that belies his decidedly nerdy and quirky humor.

DAVID STUDEBAKER

A Punch Line favorite who started at the unripe age of 19, Studebaker is a quickly rising young performer with comedic insight well beyond his years.

ANDREW HOLMGREN

Holmgren is a young but strong comic who also produces the popular Get Yucked Up! Saturday night showcase. He's paving his own path in the oversaturated market of young stoner comics.

NATASHA MUSE

A versatile comedian, actress, and producer, Muse brings cerebral wit, sneaky puns, and a sly half-smile to clubs, stages, and buses throughout the Bay Area.

Ben Feldman

Anya G. Photography

KASEEM BENTLEY

Bentley has long been a favorite local headliner, and is starting to break out as a star in the scene, with festival appearances and his own new show, Moonlighting SF.

BEN FELDMAN

With a dry wit that was praised by Robin Williams himself, Feldman brings a cool East Coast charm to Bay Area stages. From a sarcastic rant to a subtle pun, his act is clever, playful, and delightfully provocative.

the Mission. This live monthly stand-up, sketch, improv, and all-around hilarious comedy show features an array of improv stars, stand-up favorites, and talented actors from around the Bay Area. The eclectic troupe was featured in SF Sketchfest 2013 and included special guest Brody Stevens in starring sketch roles. These performers — some young, some seasoned — all bring their own unique views, talents, and humor to the show. There is usually something for everyone.

BEST COMEDY TROUPE

SYLVAN PRODUCTIONS

SylvanProductions.com

This comedy powerhouse not only produces dozens of shows around the city, but it also brings comedians together to live in a sort of "comedy frat house" of inspiration and support. Members of the Sylvan House work together to support each other's professional paths and to produce some of the best comedy in the Bay Area on stage and film. Staple member OJ Patterson curates the popular Courting Comedy blog that gives a behind-the-scenes peek into the local stand-up scene. Sylvan runs the popular Wednesday night open mic at Dirty Trix Saloon, as well as the unique Open Improv, Get Yucked Up!, and Storking Comedy showcases throughout the Bay Area.

BEST CHAMELEON COMIC

MILES K

CleverThingsToSay.com

Miles K weaves his clever, twisted humor into everything he does, whether it's live or video sketches, stand-up, Twitter, blogging, or satirical journalism. His performances range from clever hipster

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cynicism to wacky and upbeat characters, ever unpredictable and always hilarious. While many Bay Area comedy fans might know him from the stage at Punch Line or Cobb's, Miles will delight comedy fans of any ilk with his bag of tricks on- and offline. With his stand-up featured at SF Sketchfest, Laughing Skull, and the SF Comedy and Burrito Festival; and writing published by College Humor and more, San Franciscans will probably someday be able to say that they remember him back before he got big.

BEST VARIETY HOUR

WRITERS WITH DRINKS

The Make-Out Room, 3225 22nd. St., monthly WritersWithDrinks.com

"Variety is more than just having sex dressed as Alien Greenspan every once in a while," declares the website for Writers With Drinks, the once-monthly literary variety hour at the Make-Out Room. Our host, the astonishingly vivacious Charlie Jane Anders, writes about science fiction for io9.com. But Charlie doesn't hold with genre limitations. WWD features writers from all walks of life ... although sometimes you have to check their websites to figure them out, because Charlie's brilliant and hilarious introductions are also highly fictionalized. WWD is practically an institution: It's been running since 2001.

BEST THEATER FOR WRITERS

MAGIC THEATRE

It's called the House that Sam built — as in Sam Shepard. The Magic Theatre isn't just about the actors. The people who write the words those actors say on stage play an important role as well. Because of the theatre's support of writers, nationally recognized playwright Octavio Solis left

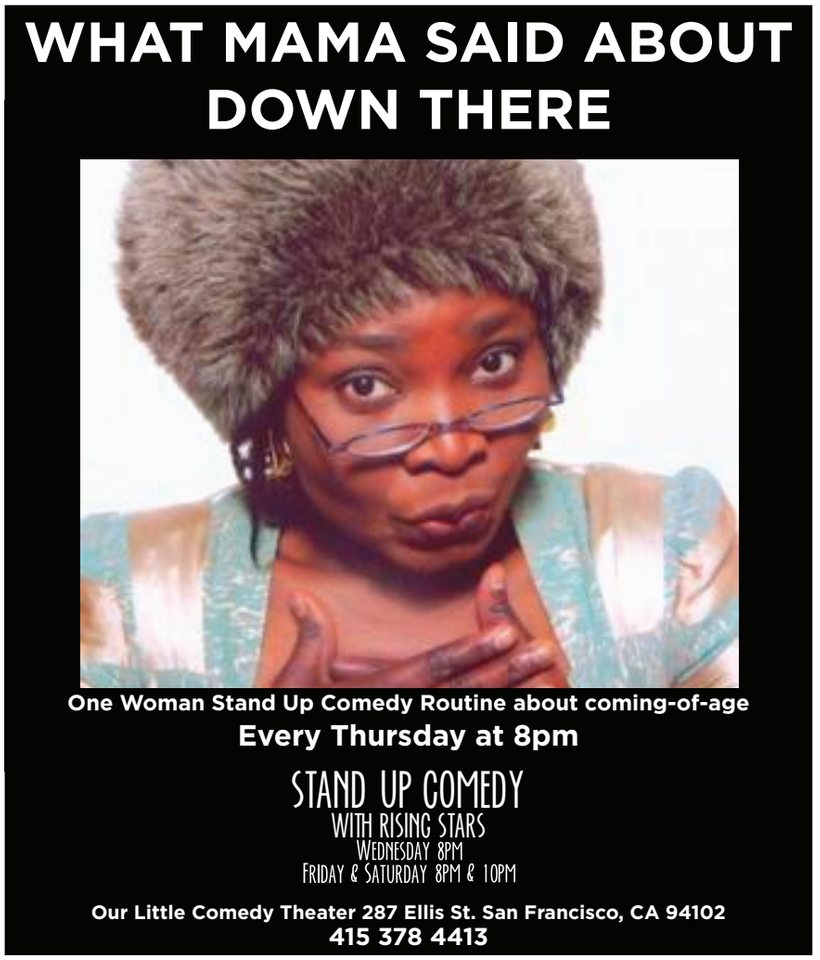
BEST PLACE TO HEAR JAZZ

Tim Griffiths

ROBERT MINER AUDITORIUM

201 Franklin St., (866) 920-5299

For 30 years, ever since founding the San Francisco Jazz Center, Randall Kline wanted a home base. Now, he's got it, with the country's first standalone jazz center. Kline worked with a theater designer, a sound engineer, and an architect to create the best possible space to hear jazz. SFJAZZ's Robert Miner Auditorium combines the intimacy of a club with the acoustics of Carnegie Hall. It took its influences from New England town meeting halls and Unitarian churches — places about people, not hierarchy. Some seats might be better than others, but there isn't a bad one in the house.



Texas to come to San Francisco more than 20 years ago to find a home for his writing at the Magic. Artistic Director Loretta Greco, (who is opening next season with Shepard's Pulitzer-Prize winning *Buried Child*), works to nurture their relationships with writers such as Sharr White, Lloyd Suh, Linda McLean, and Luis Alfaro, the MacArthur-winning playwright, whose adaptations of Greek plays *Medea* (Bruja) and *Oedipus* (Oedipus El Rey) premiered at the Magic.

BEST SEXY STORIES

BAWDY STORYTELLING

The Verdi Club, 2424 Mariposa St., monthly
BawdyStoryTelling.com

Themes like "Starf*ckers," "Cockblocked," "Cut-Rate Coitus," and "Bottoms Up!" — "true stories of anal, alcohol, and submission (why pick one?)" — make each Bawdy Storytelling event a remarkably coherent selection of salacious tales. Storytellers perform live, so anything at all can happen, although the lovely host Dixie de la Tour helps each one practice their performance ahead of time. Dixie also makes the event extra engaging with crowd-mingling games, giveaways, and other charming activities. Many storytellers are professional writers or sex educators, but there are plenty of people from other backgrounds who just had to share a wild memory.

BEST USE OF PAINT AND IMPROVISATION

TIGRE BAILANDO

TigreBailando.com

Hypnotic improviser Tigre Bailando is his own work of art. Using his body as a canvas, the artist/dancer/preschool teacher greets each day with a new design in a practice he calls "Everyday Warrior" to honor the ceremonial painting of indigenous peoples worldwide. He names mythology, graffiti, poetry, folktales, cultural artifacts, and the natural world among the multitudinous inspirations that radiate out in his prints, sculptures, masks, jewelry, paintings, and digital art. As with all improvisation, the watchword is "play," to which Bailando contributes a reverence for ritual and the understated power of one who makes peace his primary offering. Bailando performs regularly at People Party at the New Parish.

BEST WHIRLING DERVISH

THE MILISSA PAYNE PROJECT'S REVOLVE

MilissaPayne.com

Milissa Payne Bradley makes a Lazy Susan work in her quirky piece *Revolve*. In this excerpt from *Up in the Air*, Payne Bradley's colorful evening-length ballet about the wonders of hot air ballooning, Jamielyn Duggan spins upon a homemade disc in the center of the floor with daring, devil-may-care glee before leaping directly into precise, speedy footwork. In a piece about choices and change, the chance revolutions of the disc evoke a wheel of fortune that the dancer attacks from all sides with cavalier panache. The Milissa Payne Project performs *Up in the Air* Aug. 14-18 in ODC Theater's Sixth Annual Summer Performance Festival.

BEST PLACE IN THE HAIGHT TO SEE HIPPIE PLANT ART

1012 MASONIC AVENUE

Tenants in this building have "potted" three plants into old jeans that line the front steps, right next to the street. It's the funkiest fashion in the Haight. When the tenants water the plants, the jeans hold the water because the pant legs are tied into knots. A poppy plant occupies one pair of jeans, while an ice plant anchors another. The plant in the third pair is a wisp of undetermined genus. Lots of passersby walking south to Haight Street stop and stare at the "jean plants." The foliage is a trippy preview of what's to come on the blocks ahead.

BEST PLACE TO SEE STREET ART CLOSE TO A FEDERAL BUILDING

530 TURK STREET

The walls in the parking lot across from the Phillip Burton Federal Building are a forest of memorable street art — put there in plain view of federal employees who'd never tolerate a tag on their pristine building, which has cameras that monitor all street-level activity. At 530 Turk, though, wild green lettering zigzags across the back wall, while the right wall has two sections of art that demand perusal: a panorama of a brown city, with large charcoal columns; and a panorama of a forest, centered around a green Buddha figure and wild gray letter tags. It takes $15 to park your car in the parking

lot. It costs nothing to walk into the lot and check out the street art that's among the best in the Tenderloin.

BEST PLACE ON MARKET STREET TO SEE THOUGHT-PROVOKING SCULPTURE

720 MARKET STREET

The entranceway here contains a tall Stephen De Staebler's "angel" sculpture that seems ready to fly away. With no obvious eyes and no obvious mouth, this winged sculpture is a bit of a puzzle, but it's an inspired puzzle that regularly causes people to do a double-take as they walk between Kearny and Grant. Last year, the de Young Museum exhibited De Staebler's angels and other sculpture in a major show, "Matter + Spirit: The Sculpture of Stephen De Staebler," that drew raves. This piece at 720 Market Street, installed in 1989, is one of De Staebler's very best.

BEST AQUARIUM-TURNED-DANCE FLOOR

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

55 Music Concourse, 379-8000
CalAcademy.org

One of the weirdest dancefloors ever installed anywhere was made of Plexiglas and stretched across a 20,000-gallon tank filled with sharks at Qua in Austin, Texas. Unfortunately, it's now closed, but you can experience the next best thing at the California Academy of Sciences' weekly "Nightlife" events. Every Thursday evening the museum converts into a makeshift discotheque, using its various rooms to host DJs pulled from the city's best parties. Venture downstairs to Steinhart Aquarium, and, on select nights, you can dance next to a stunning variety of tropical fish. It might not be on the order of a shark-tank dancefloor, but we always thought that sounded kind of cruel anyway.

BEST NEW COMMUNITY THEATER

Z BELOW

470 Florida, 626-0453
ZSpace.org

Z Space recently opened its new theater, Z Below, "to be a catalyst for the creation of new works." It's well on the way. The 88-seat theater has already hosted two great reading series, and when PianoFight used Z Below to test a new format with *Variety Show Death Match*, the show sold out. Now it's moving to the larger theater upstairs. In June, Z Below will host the Writing Outside the Box series, which invites well-known writers and filmmakers to read from work they've done outside their genre. The first one is curated by Charlie Varon, who directed Dan Hoyle's smash hit *The Real Americans*. Expect big things from this little theater.

BEST MASKED BAND

THE RESIDENTS

Residents.com

This avant-garde band, founded in Louisiana but bred in San Francisco thanks to a van that broke down in the Bay Area in 1966, has been infamously anonymous for at least four decades. The Residents call 2013 their 40th anniversary, marked by the international Wonder of Weird Tour, but it's likely that the band has been together for longer

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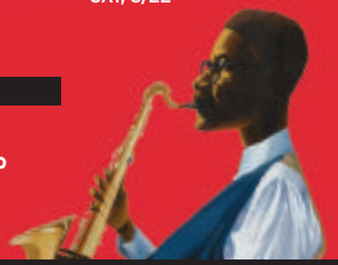

Illustration by Mark Ulriksen

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than that. Many brilliant disguises have been donned over the years, but their eyeball-as-face masks, crowned with a jaunty top hat, are the most iconic and recognizable. Fortunately, there has been no ill-conceived KISS-style reveal of the individual members' faces, keeping the mystique of The Residents intact. You could be riding around on Muni with one of them every day and not even know it.

BEST BAND OF ZANY MUSICAL CLOWNS

GOOFERMAN

Gooferman.com

The self-proclaimed "kings of klown-fi" have gone through an awful lot of pancake makeup since forming in San Francisco in 2001. The liberal use of white faces and red accents might draw a lot of visual comparisons to the slightly sinister Midwest act Insane Clown Posse. But sonically, Gooferman is much more from the school of Red Hot Chili Peppers punk funk, albeit balanced atop circus pillars. The band already has a motley crew of circus performers who enhance the live shows, and Gooferman has held down the stage at large-scale music events like Burning Man, Electric Daisy Carnival, Bumbershoot, and Lightning in a Bottle. All that's really needed now are a couple of elephants and a lion to complete the traveling circus feel.

BEST PODCAST ABOUT WHORES TO BE PERSONALLY ENDORSED BY IRA GLASS

THE WHORECAST

TheWhoreCast.com

Earlier this year, threats of legal action from Chicago Public Media forced local podcaster, porn star, activist, musician, and part-time mermaid Siouxsie Q to change the name of her podcast from This American Whore to The WhoreCast. She may have lost the name, but in exchange she got national press and an endorsement from Ira Glass himself, who called the show "charming." He couldn't have chosen a more apt descriptor. The WhoreCast's cult following is largely due to Siouxsie Q's infectious charm when interviewing sexual outlaws like Maggie Mayhem and Poppy Cox. There have been some very touching, honest moments on The WhoreCast as well, such as when she and her partner, Jesse James, talked about telling his parents about her sex work. If, one day, parents discourage their kids from becoming investment bankers so they can grow up to be respectable, hard-working whores, it may be because of all that time listening to The WhoreCast.

BEST FILM FESTIVAL BY AND FOR SEX WORKERS

SAN FRANCISCO SEX WORKER FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL

SexWorkerFest.com

Founded in 1999 by "unrepentant whore" and activist Carol Leigh, the biennial San Francisco Sex Worker Film and Arts Festival is the one of the longest-running of its kind. According to Leigh, it's rivaled only by one in Calcutta, founded in 1997. The festival, now in its eighth incarnation at the Center for Sex and Culture, includes an exploration of personal and political issues of sex workers around the world through film, lectures, and performances. The films include programs on transgender issues, Thailand, whore identities, and the use of "trafficking" to stigmatize sex work. For those in a more festive state of mind, multimedia artist Mariko Passion offered a Whorriffic Cabaret followed by a ride on the Popcorn Theatre Bus. The festival closed out with an event for sex workers only: a "Whore's Bath," where attendees treated themselves to some pampering with massage, mani-pedis, and Reiki treatments.

BEST LEAP INTO RELEVANCE

SAN FRANCISCO MAGAZINE

ModernLuxury.com/San-Francisco

As *San Francisco* magazine's truly terrible web address reveals, the publication is better known as the place to get the scoop on who's decorating City Hall rather than who's running it. But this is changing. Newish editor Jon Steinberg is a news guy, not a luxury guy. Under his watch, the magazine has consistently published incisive and relevant stories about both the quotidian and longstanding goings-on in this city. And, yes, you can still find crap about "Shaker-inspired armchairs" and the asses that sit in them.

ASIAN ART MUSEUM MAY 24—JUL 21, 2013
www.asianart.org

What is Asia? Its influences are everywhere and we each encounter it differently. Some of the Bay Area's most exciting artists—**Elisheva Biernoff, Lisa K. Blatt, Ala Ebtekar, James Gobel, Tucker Nichols, Larry Sultan, Andrew Witrak**—answer this question in *Proximities,* a series of three intimate exhibitions. This first installment presents landscapes, imagined and real.

SPECIAL EVENT, Thursday, May 30, 6–9 PM, $10 (FREE for students with college ID). Remarks, in-gallery artist talks, DJ Jacob Sperber (Honey Soundsystem), special cocktail and demo by Daniel Hyatt, new media performance by Surabhi Saraf and more.

This exhibition was organized by the Asian Art Museum and is made possible with the generous support of Graue Family Foundation and Columbia Foundation. Lead funding for Thursday Nights Programs is provided by Wells Fargo. Image: *Antioch Creek* (detail), 2008, by Larry Sultan (American, 1946–2009). Chromogenic print, edition of nine. H. 40 ⅝ x W. 49 ¾ in. © Estate of Larry Sultan. Courtesy of the Stephen Wirtz Gallery and Pier 24 Photography.

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BEST MUSIC BIZ DOG-AND-PONY SHOW

SF MUSICTECH SUMMIT

Hotel Kabuki, 1625 Post, 564-0904
SFMusicTech.com

Part tech-geek confab, part self-promotion contest, and good excuse to drink beer and eat brownies while talking to people you've never met before, the twice-annual SF MusicTech Summit provides a fascinating window into the tech side of today's music industry. The highlight of each edition is usually the inevitable shouting match between tech whiz-kids who believe The Internet Rules All and rock codgers who wanna know where their fat royalty checks went. There are always a few fun (and alarming) predictions aired at the daylong event's panel discussions, too. But for many, the important part of the conference happens in the Hotel Kabuki's packed hallways, where musicians, code geeks, and grizzled industry types make deals, trade business cards, and otherwise forward this fascinating and sometimes ugly business of music. Whether you're a music nerd navigating the web wild west, or a tech type looking to get into a new space, the lessons gained from one day at the SF MusicTech Summit are usually worth the price of entry.

BEST PLACE TO TRAIN FOR THE CENTER RING OF ROCK 'N' ROLL

SAN FRANCISCO ROCK PROJECT

450 Harrison, 495-7625
RockProjectSF.org

Good parents wants their kids to be rock stars, right? Right — or at least they should. And there's no better place to sow a stage-strutting future for young Johnny or Sally than the San Francisco Rock Project, a nonprofit dedicated to teaching kids the musical skills needed to become the golden gods of the next generation. In a sense, S.F. Rock Project is your basic music school, albeit a louder one: Kids attend weekly private lessons on the rock instrument of their choice. But the difference here is the program's emphasis on live performance in an ensemble, which every student gets to do at least once per season. Playing with a group teaches kids timing, listening, and, importantly, stage presence. It also teaches them confidence. So even if you aren't hoping to raise the next Jimmy Page, San Francisco Rock Project might be a valuable experience for your offspring. It would certainly be an awesome one.

BEST USE OF SILK TRAPEZE

Weidong Yang

LABAYEN DANCE/ SF'S TEARS

LabayenDanceSF.org

Enrico Labayen's lament for his sister begins with tiny movements of the hand and foot — subtle signs of life that we seek in our departing loved ones. The dancers are sphinxes commanding silence, then break into individual phrases commemorating multiple moments and moods of life. The slap of their outspread arms against the floor is vulnerable and defiant, a reminder of our earthly origins — a reminder, too, that the floor is the dancer's tool, even as it is a barrier, holding us apart from what lies beneath. The tableau is completed by the limber Yuko Hata, iconic as a crucifix or quietly cocooned in white aerial silks, climbing, soaring, and spinning above the stage as those below transition from turmoil to resignation. Labayen Dance/SF performs Tears in its Fall Season Sept. 12-15 at ODC Theater.

BEST TOURIST DIVERSION THAT'S WORTH IT FOR LOCALS

BEACH BLANKET BABYLON

678 Green, 421-4222
BeachBlanketBabylon.com

It's kinda expensive, the seating is tightly packed, and you have to wait in line for an hour or more to get in — so why don't more San Francisco locals appreciate the wonder that is *Beach Blanket Babylon*? Part of it must be the musical comedy show's

reputation as a must-do for visitors. But the same could be said of Blue Bottle Coffee — and *Beach Blanket Babylon* is way more memorable. Perhaps San Franciscans fear that a comedy show that so delights tourists couldn't possibly satisfy their urbane tastes. But they are wrong. *Beach Blanket Babylon*, the longest-running musical revue in America, is witty and clever and so funny that it hurts your jaw muscles. It makes you proud to live here, proud that an institution that could so easily rest on its laurels instead keeps its punchlines sharp and its pop-culture references thrillingly up-to-the-minute. Ostensibly a tale about Snow White looking for love in the big, wide world, *Beach Blanket Babylon* is really a running series of gags about the absurdities of modern life, albeit one with lots of weird, huge hats. Which, come to think of it, is just one more thing S.F.'s offbeat residents should appreciate.

BEST INSPIRATION
CITY ARTS & LECTURES
1955 Sutter, 563-2463
CityArts.net

It's easy to tune in to this series of inspiring lectures from heavy-hitters in the fields of art, science, literature, and culture on KQED, but even better to see it in person. With more than 50 lectures every year, City Arts & Lectures packs the Herbst Theater with luminaries like Gloria Steinem, Michael Chabon, Cheryl Strayed, and more. Best of all, the "On Arts" series benefits 826 Valencia's scholarship program — so although you'll have to shell out for a ticket, you'll know the money is going to a good cause.

BEST LOCAL HIP-HOP TRUTH SERUM
THE COUP
Facebook.com/TheCoup

Oligarchs, capitalists, and coke-addled trust-fund brats, radical Oakland rap outfit The Coup is coming for you. Led by charismatic propagandist/MC Boots Riley, the group uses live instrumentation and electric wordplay to make hella fun songs about fighting the man: "Your Parents' Cocaine" is a goofy piano-and-kazoo anthem about the spoiled offspring of snow-sniffing WASPs, while "The Guillotine" reprises that most symbolic of execution tools to warn of would-be oppressors: "They got the TV/We got the truth/They own the judges/And we got the proof/We got hella people/They got helicopters." Both are off The Coup's latest, deservedly acclaimed album *Sorry to Bother You*, and both only work because Riley and crew believe in what they blurt. You don't have to be an Occupy radical to enjoy The Coup's music, but it's fun and powerful enough that it might turn you into one.

BEST SINGER WITH A DISAPPEARING ACT
MORRISSEY
Morrissey-Solo.com

It would have been funny twice, mildly annoying three times, and a serious bummer the fourth. But when Morrissey canceled his fifth and six Bay Area shows in a row this spring, he made the leap from pop star prima donna to somewhat talented asshole. Supposedly touring the U.S. this year, the vegan Brit managed to bring the songs of his deep, beloved catalog to the live stage in L.A and Denver, but not Oakland or S.F. Often, his cancellations came only a handful of hours before showtime, adding to his fans' heartbreak (and his promoters' frustration). To make matters worse, the former Smiths singer had a nasty habit of cancellations in this market even before the current string. So, until proven otherwise, we are forced to believe one of two things: That the pompous, pompadoured Morrissey doesn't actually exist, and the rest of the world is just playing an elaborate, cruel joke on his Bay Area fans; or that he's a deluded jerk who doesn't realize how thoroughly he's broken people's hearts. Either way, we're on board with the sentiment of a sticker released this spring by local graphics house SubliminalSF, which reads, simply, "Fuck Moz."

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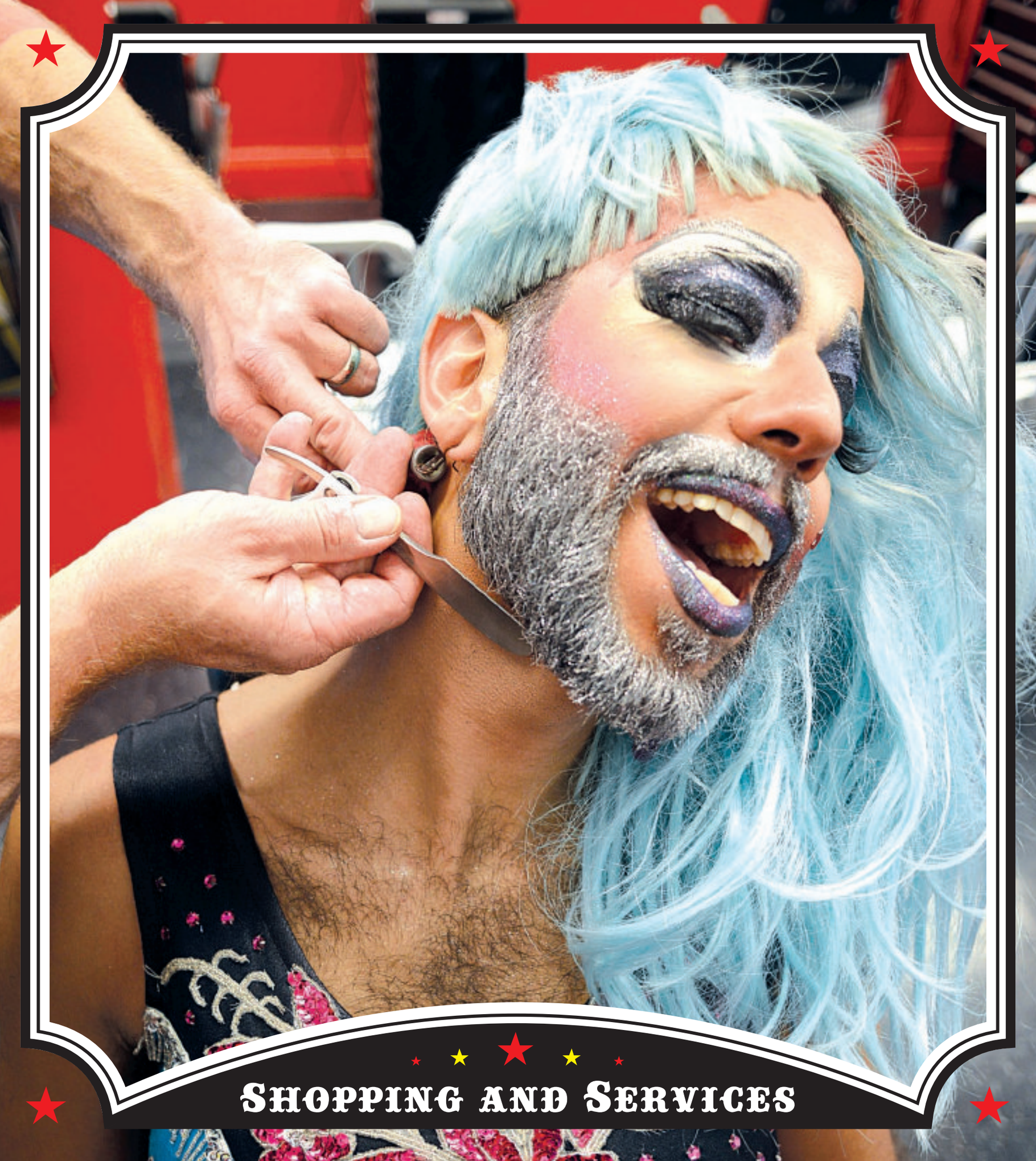

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TRANGELA LANSBURY

PAGE 14

BEST PLACE TO MAKE YOUR TROUBLES DISAPPEAR (WHILE LEARNING TO SAW A LIVE WOMAN IN HALF)

MISDIRECTIONS MAGIC SHOP

1236 Ninth Ave., 566-2180
Misdirections.com

Time was, every town had at least one magic shop, but thanks to the rise of the Internet and the decline of retail, they're practically an endangered species. Misdirections has survived by helping to foster a community of magicians, while still serving the casual dabbler. It has all the usual card tricks, wolf whistles, whoopee cushions, magic wands, and vanishing foam balls expected of a magic store. But it also has a magic club and lecture series that cater to the professional (or aspiring) conjurer. And, occasionally, the pros can be overheard discussing their tricks in a small, mysterious room behind the counter.

BEST PLACE TO LEARN YOUR SAME-SEX WEDDING DANCE

VIMA DANCE STUDIO

820 26th St., 977-0203
VimaDance.com

The Supreme Court is poised to rule on the legality of Proposition 8 and the Defense of Marriage Act, but as far as history is concerned, the verdict on gay marriage is in. And it's a fair bet that many of those couples are dreading the traditional wedding dance as much as their straight counterparts. They should head to Vima Dance Studio. Dance Director Photis Pishiaras specializes in same-sex ballroom dance. Pishiaras and his dance partner Ron Jenkins (also an instructor) are the 2012 and 2013 North American Same Sex Partner Dance Association Men's Standard champions, and the studio reflects their influence. It is gay/straight friendly, has a monthly party for extra practice time, and offers private and group instruction in several styles of traditional and same-sex ballroom dance.

BIGGEST RETAIL SIDESHOW

UNIQLO

111 Powell, (877) 486-4756
Uniqlo.com

When the Japanese fashion retail giant Uniqlo first debuted in San Francisco in October, there was a red velvet rope and a bouncer to manage the huge lines that formed outside to get a glance at a true fashion circus. Upon first making it into the stark white store, pristine rows of identical clothes crafted in endless bright hues seem to defy the so-called variety of

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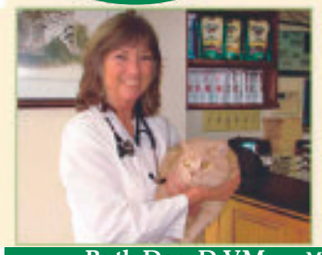
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other shops. (Uniqlo makes other retailers' inventories look thin by comparison.) A chirpy recorded voice greets shoppers to this attraction, as if the show is about to begin. And this massive retail sideshow is working: Uniqlo has declared an intention to expand even further in San Francisco before moving on to other West Coast cities such as Los Angeles.

BEST THRIFT-BY-THE-POUND

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473 Valencia, 621-3212
RetroCity.com

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BEST S.F. BARBERSHOP (FOR NON-LOCAL TRANSPLANTS)

JOE'S BARBERSHOP

2150 Market, 255-9096
JoesBarbershop.com

Newcomers to town without a barbershop of their own may be hard-pressed to fit in on Fillmore Street or Geneva Avenue, where hangers-out are still fresh meat even after a decade. Beards and bikes are welcome to get cut here, as are fades and shaved heads (straight razor for the latter), bears and cubs, gays and straights, longhairs and so on. Owner Joe Gallagher has been taking a little off the top and sides since 2004. Not even a March 2012 fire could keep the scissors and shavers silent; the Castro District digs now houses hair-cutters seven days a week.

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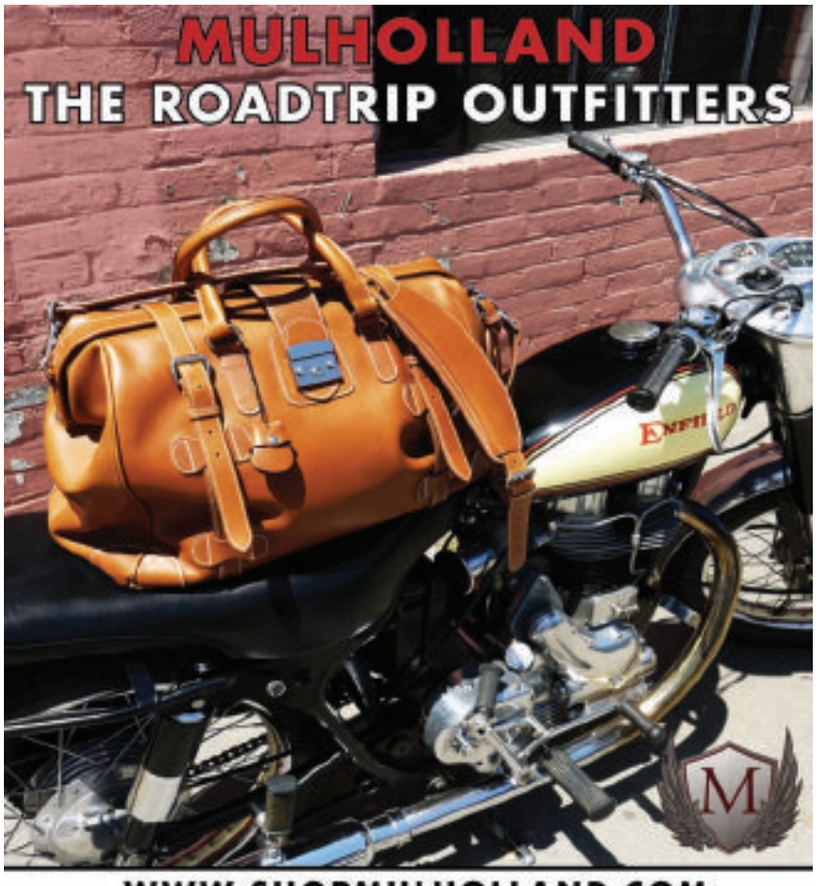

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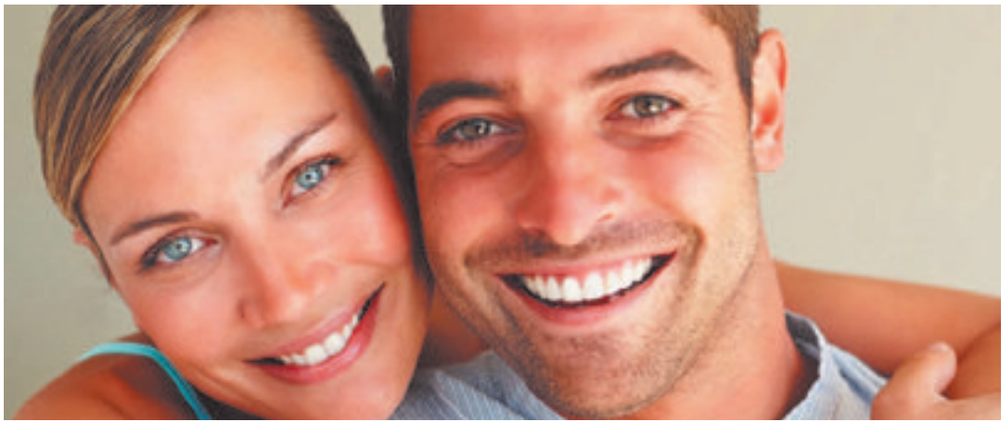

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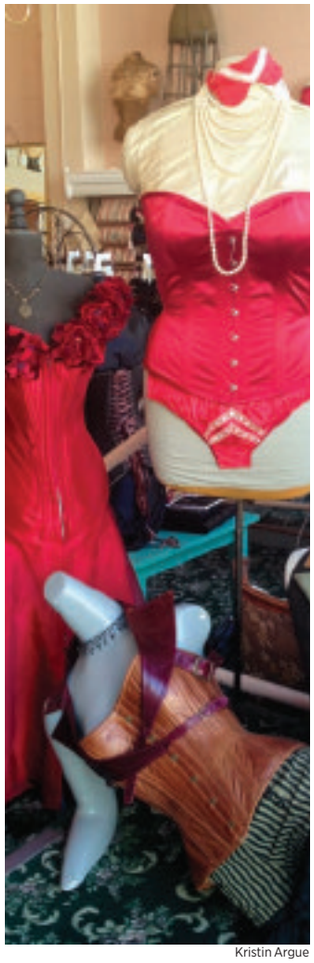
BEST LINGERIE

DARK GARDEN

321 Linden, 431-7684
DarkGarden.com

This boutique's proprietress, Autumn Adamme, has been handcrafting corsets in San Francisco for more than 20 years. Her shop, hidden away in Hayes Valley, is a paradise of silks, ribbons, and trims that are whipped together in the back of the store into whatever custom creations her clients desire. But first-timers don't need an intimate knowledge of the corsetry world to make a purchase here — Dark Garden offers ready-to-wear items as well, which cinch just enough to feel shockingly comfortable. And who knows? Maybe you'll catch a glimpse of celebrity clients like Dita Von Teese and Christina Aguilera while browsing the racks.



Kristin Argue

which prices its garments per pound rather than per item. This system makes it easy to load up on lightweight staple items without completely unloading your bank account. It's an American consumer dream to finally be able to buy all those things you need — retro Giants T-shirts, perhaps, or a pile of vintage scarves to beef up your collection — and have it priced just like deli ham. (Pro tip: Steer clear of the coats and other bulkier items so the scale doesn't surprise you.)

BEST THRIFT STORE

THRIFT TOWN

2101 Mission, 861-1132
ThriftTown.com

Even with a new posh, heavily-curated vintage store popping up on Valencia or Haight Street every other week, there's something about this tried-and-true Mission thrift store that never gets old. Thrift Town boasts that it puts out 4,000 new items on their floor every day, which is hard to believe until you've seen just how many racks are

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(925) 363-7770	(510) 559-1055	(415) 409-0350	(408) 249-0455	(650) 312-8270

GuitarCenter.com

BEST TATTOO SHOPS TO TURN YOU INTO A PAINTED LADY (OR MAN)

BY KATE CONGER

Everyone's getting inked these days — but it's less common to see a truly stunning tattoo. Luckily, artists have flocked here since the Barbary Coast era, and finding one to collaborate with won't be nearly as painful as the tattoo itself. The man partially responsible for San Francisco's predilection toward tattooing, Don Ed Hardy, still runs **Tattoo City** (700 Lombard St., 345-9437, TattooCitySF.com) after 40 years in the business. His small team of artists adeptly covers a range of tattoo styles. Or venture to **Idle Hand** (575 Haight St., 552-4353, IdleHandSF.com), where artist Holly Ellis doles out remarkable black-and-gray portraits of loved ones, pets, and, of course, Elvis. In SOMA, **Seventh Son** (65 Langton St., 551-7766, SeventhSonTattoo.com) offers large-scale custom designs, and, for tattoo-loving commitment-phobes, T-shirts created in collaboration with Colin Kaepernick, based on his tattoos. For traditional style and the gentlest hand we've ever sat for, visit Ali Samantha at **Mom's** (1408 Haight St., 864-6667, MomsTattooSF.com). If you're in the market for fearsomely vivid color work, **Skull & Sword** (3415 Cesar Chavez St., 552-4297, TheSkullAndSword.com) won't lead you astray. But no matter where you go, tip nicely and you'll be circus-ready in no time.

crammed into the space. But Thrift Town's true treasure is hidden in the furniture section on the second floor — should you be lucky enough to score an apartment in this city, you can furnish the whole place there.

BEST JEWELRY
RELIQUARY
537 Octavia, 431-4000
ReliquarySanFrancisco.com

Although this boutique is stocked with plenty of beautiful clothes, you'll always find us with our noses pressed up against the jewelry case, gawking at Reliquary's stunning collection of vintage and modern gems. The store touts itself as "trend-resistant," and nowhere is that more evident than in its timeless jewelry selections. In addition to "trend-resistant," we'll add "dunce-proof" to Reliquary's résumé — purchase any piece you like, but you'll always look fabulous.

BEST VINTAGE STORE
SCHAUPLATZ
791 Valencia, 864-5665

When it comes to stockpiling dresses for your retro pinup wardrobe, look no further than Schauplatz. This store's rigorous buying standards mean that nothing on the rack is less than totally impeccable, and the entire stock originates from several generations prior to our own. The staff is fervently help-

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Nelson Jang

BEST PLACE TO FIND A COLLAR WORTH POPPING

DEPARTMENT SEVENTEEN

78 Gough, 503-1338
Dept17.com

Jay Gatsby would feel right at home in Hayes Valley's Department Seventeen and its stellar selection of button-down shirts. Aspiring dapper dressers can browse through racks holding varying styles of Japanese denim and subtle cotton patterns from designers like Adam Band and Post Overalls. Of course there's a large selection of pocket squares, and you can layer up for S.F.'s variable temperatures with outerwear like padded vests from Crescent Down Works. The boutique also stocks some pants, shoes, womenswear, and accessories, but it's really all about the shirts. You'll be Marina-ready in no time at all.

ful, and the rotation of old soul records is also guaranteed to transport you to bygone decades, which will help get you in the appropriate mood for shopping.

BEST DESIGNER DUDS

MAC

1003 Minnesota, 285-2805
ModernAppealingClothing.com

MAC sells the kinds of clothes you never expect to find in a city where CEOs wear sweatshirts: designer collections, architectural pieces, high-end mens- and womenswear. It stocks the simplistic structural designs of Commes des Garcons, Maison Martin Margiela, and others that feel right at home in the store's industrial Dogpatch location. Pick through the well-known labels and you'll also find several up-and-coming local designers.

BEST SHOES

SHOE BIZ

1420 Haight, 864-0990
ShoeBizSF.com

We're convinced Shoe Biz is hiding a magical magnet somewhere in the store that sucks our credit cards right out of our wallets. We'd put up a fight, but frankly, the store is doing our closets a favor. The killer selection of men's and women's shoes means you can take your date shopping and he'll never complain — and he'll probably wind up with a few new pairs of his own. Be careful not to

BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO 2013

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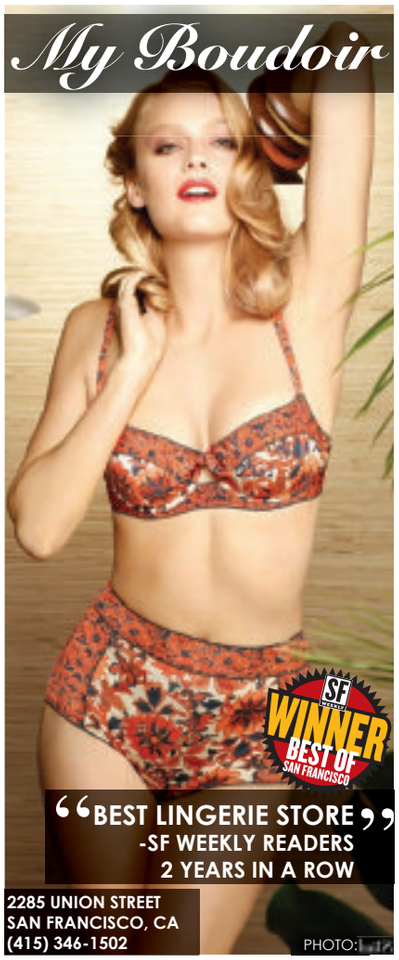

miss the sale section in the back, as it's regularly stocked with great finds. On second thought, avoid the sale section entirely — we're laying claim to it.

BEST LOCAL DESIGNER

JARRED GARZA OF ARCHETYPE

984 Market, 335-9666

Jarred Garza's Market Street boutique and studio is one of San Francisco's hidden gems. Although you'd never guess it from looking at his clothes, Garza has a background in designing costumes for the circus and Burning Man. These days, he's taking a more subtle approach with Archetype, crafting cocktail dresses from upcycled vintage fabrics. But don't think he's lost his edge — Garza likes to manipulate the line between masculine and feminine in his work, and will customize a design to fit anyone's figure.

BEST PLACE TO (LEGALLY) GET HIGH

LOUNGE 847

847 Howard, 618-0847

The days of smoking lounges are on their way out. Thank the federal government for that. While you can, gather publicly in a spot where cannabis complements the game of pool or the 49ers, Giants, Sharks, or Warriors game on one of the many flatscreens at this tidy South of Market hangout. The polite but firm staff doles out vaporizers, water pipes and straight glass as needed, and for those who question the wisdom of a third-floor space for a medical marijuana smokers' lounge? The old-school, loft-style cargo elevator, of course.

BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO 2013

BEST UPBEAT FITNESS-CLASS INSTRUCTOR

SANDRA VADO-CONTRERAS FROM VIBE 365 FITNESS

Vibe365Fitness.com

It can be intimidating to walk into a fitness class for the first time, but Sandra Vado-Contreras makes everyone feel welcome, and has the first timer sweating in no time. Her personal training sessions and Pilates and high-intensity Zumba classes definitely can leave you hurting the next day, but she's so upbeat, positive, and engaging that she keeps people coming back for more — which is why most of her classes are full of regulars whom she knows by name. She'll often work her way around the room encouraging individuals to keep going while making sure everyone is doing the movements in way to help strengthen the body and not cause injury. She's more than someone who just instructs the class, she's a personal cheerleader for everyone in there.

Bret Woodard

BEST PLACE TO STROLL IN NAKED AND WALK OUT STYLISH

UNIONMADE

493 Sanchez St., 861-3373
UnionMadeGoods.com

Granted, this problem may only arise for time-travelers and Terminators, but still: If anyone of the male persuasion ever finds themselves in San Francisco lacking all clothing and outfitting save for a diamond ring and/or a debit card, they ought to stumble straight into Unionmade. This shop in the Castro retails every layer of man-friendly outfits and accessories, from vintage-style boxer shorts to premium eyewear; it even carries bags, scarves, magazines, and collars for dogs. Given the store's focus on (nearly) timeless items, including chinos, denim work shirts, and leather boots, you're sure to look slick no matter what century you've arrived from. Landed gentry looking to fit into 2010s-era Boho chic may be the ideal customer, since Unionmade makes as hefty an impact on the wallet as the eyes. But hey — where else can a discerning dude walk in nude and walk out natty?

BEST PLACE FOR A MANI/PEDI

AQUA SPA

14 Clement, 666-3273
Aqua-Spa.us

This Inner Richmond day spa only boasts four pedicure tubs and four manicure stations, so it's best to make a reservation at this tranquil spot. Before your toes hit the water, the friendly staff offers you tea,

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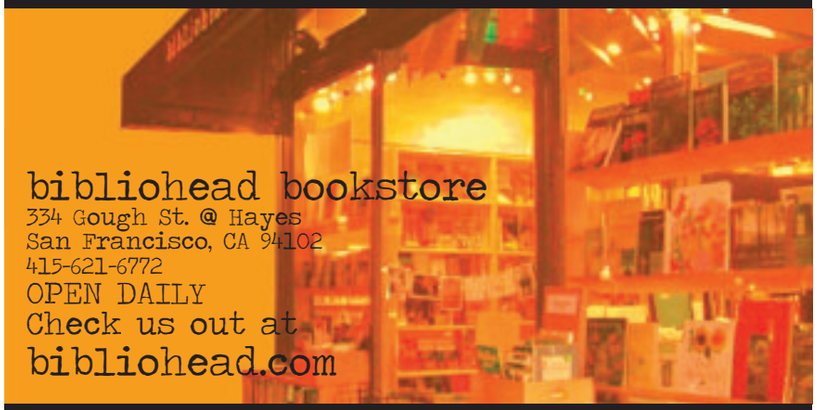

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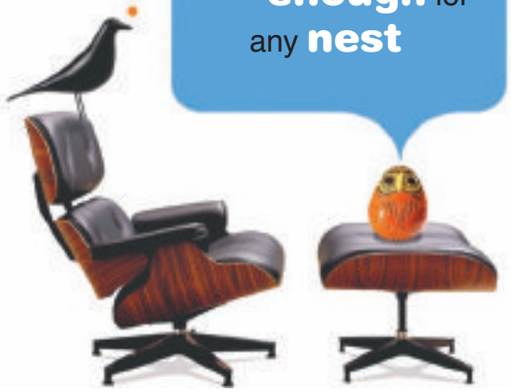

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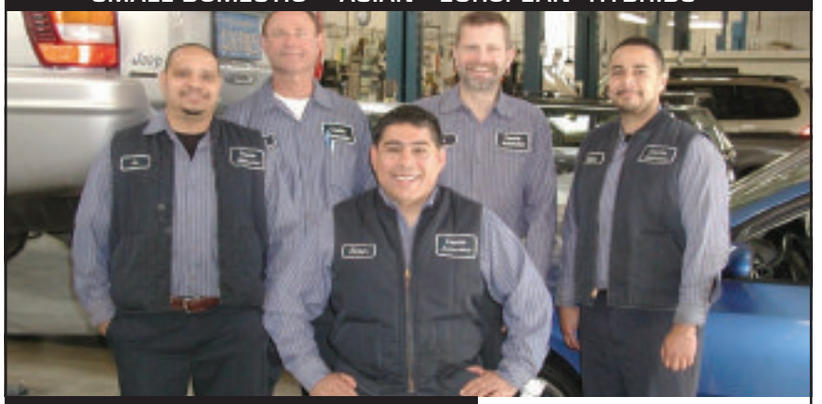

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puts a warm wrap around your shoulders, and turns on the massage chair. There's an endless supply of tabloid magazines, but there's a good chance you'll never get to that Brangelina story, because they do foot and hand massages that are so relaxing it's hard to concentrate on celebrity gossip. In addition to their basic mani/pedi packages they also offer the new popular shellac manicures. If wanting a relaxing mani/pedi, in a noxious-fume free environment, give yourself an hour and pick your new nail color.

BEST CANNABIS DISPENSARY

THE HEMP CENTER

4811 Geary, 386-4367
TheHempCenter.com

It's not easy selling green. The city's only westside pot club is now one of San Francisco's oldest continuously operating medical cannabis dispensaries — and it's easy to see why this Richmond District dispensary has persisted. A friendly and welcoming crew doles out medicine at a discount to seniors and the disabled, and a spot at the bar in front of a vaporizer and the Giants on TV cuts through the densest Avenues fog.

BEST WAY TO GET ACROSS THE BAY AFTER DARK

TIDELINE WATER TAXI

339-0196
TidelineSF.com

Cut the tethers of general ferry service, and stay for that extra drink in Sausalito. Tideline Water Taxi offers service for up to six to S.F. piers 1.5 and 40; Hyde Street; and the St. Francis Yacht Club, with destinations across the bay including Angel Island, Tiburon, and Sausalito. For someone who wants to impress a date or out-of-town guests, this is the way to do it. What's cooler than bringing someone to a waiting boat so that the two of you can get ice cream across the Bay? While the price is steep compared to Golden Gate Ferry, you get your own boat across the bay at the time you want to go home. Of course, don't expect to hail one down as they float past. Call to make a reservation; earlier is always better.

BEST UPSCALE CONSIGNMENT STORE

GOODBYES

3464 Sacramento, 346-6388, and 3483 Sacramento, 674-0151

These two Laurel Heights consignment stores, sitting across the street from each other, are the best places to pick up a Chloe dress or Prada boots without breaking the bank. Each piece is in great condition and the two locations, one for women's wear only and one for both genders, feature more classic than trendy looks, which means those boots won't go out of style next season. If wanting to trade in a pair of Christian Louboutins or an Armani sports coat, they offer an impressive 50/50 consignment, but it'll be hard to get out the store without buying a new (used) piece.

BEST PLACE TO DRESS UP YOUR INNER STRIPPER

NEW YORK APPAREL

1772 Haight, 751-8823
NYApparel.com

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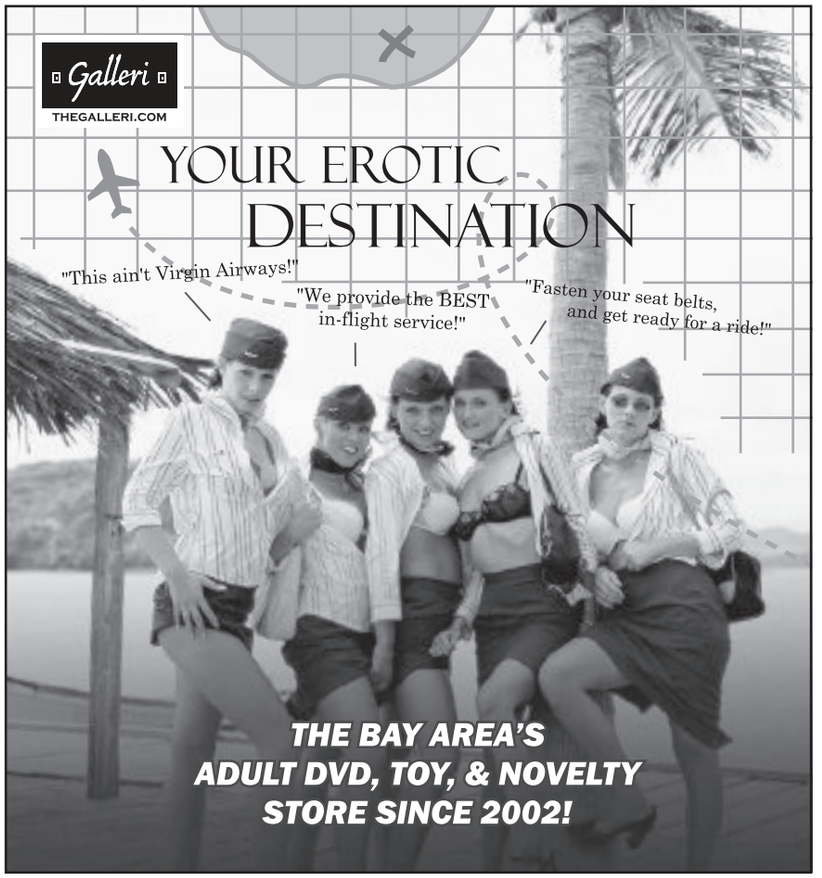

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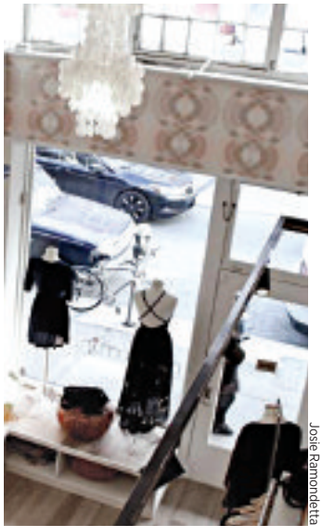

Josie Ramondetta

BEST SOCIAL MEDIA-SAVVY SHOP

MIRA MIRA

3292 22nd, 648-6513

MiraMiraSF.com

Sure, it's fun to browse the carefully curated racks of this cute Mission boutique, and much too easy to consistently find yourself shelling out your cash for their trendy wares. But it's just as much fun — if not more so — to keep up with Mira Mira online. The shop regularly updates its Tumblr with fresh photo shoots of their newest apparel, as well as mood boards to keep its fashionable following inspired. Mira Pickett, the owner, also regularly arranges collaborations with local bloggers and hosts funky hair-braiding parties to promote her business. All that work makes it tough to avoid thinking about Mira Mira — even when you're home on the couch.

hosts one of the city's best selections of lingerie, dance apparel and, ahem, club wear as it's called. From fishnets and thigh highs to bras and butt shorts, everything you need for that sexy nurse outfit or schoolgirl strip tease is right here at New York Apparel. And the prices here are lower than you will find in the swank boutiques, so you can dress up your ba-donk-a-donk without breaking the ba-bank-a-bank.

BEST PLACE TO FIND YOUR HIP-HOP SWAGGER

CITY DANCE STUDIOS

10 Colton, 297-1172

CityDance.org

From waving and popping to windmills and head spins, City Dance is the studio of choice for S.F. street dancers. There are two open practice sessions a week, each hosted by luminaries of the local hip-hop scene: Groovmekanex pops and locks on Monday nights, and Soul Sector hosts mixed practices on Wednesdays. Classes in new and old school hip-hop are offered daily, and the teachers include members of award-winning dance teams like Funkanometry and Academy of Villains. And when street dance legends come to town, this is where you'll find them. City Dance hosted Electric Boogaloos member Mr. Wiggles and hip-hop globetrotters Les Twins for special workshops this year. Insider tip: Don't call it poplockin'.

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BEST BACON
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2534 Mission, 648-7600
ForeignCinema.com

As far as we're concerned, the biggest tragedy of all the bacon-flavored-everything nonsense of the past few years is that it's obscured the fact that bacon by itself is one of the greatest foods known to man. And the slow-cooked brown sugar bacon at Foreign Cinema is the stuff that bacony dreams are made of. Chef/co-owner Gayle Pirie starts with thick-cut, applewood-smoked bacon, puts it on a sheet pan, and covers it with a goodly amount of brown sugar (like, two tablespoons a slice). Then she pops it in a convection oven for about 10 minutes and voilà, porky amazingness. It's sweet and salty at the same time, with these delicious sugary, fatty, crispy bits at the ends. Washed down with a Sunday Bloody Caesar — a Bloody Mary garnished with a fresh white gulf prawn — it becomes a brunch to remember on the ample patio or in the light-filled dining room.

BEST QUAIL
LIHOLIHO YACHT CLUB
LihoLihoYachtClub.com

This past year brought a flock of dishes featuring California's state bird to menus across the city. With a respectful nod to the signature fried version at State Bird Provisions, the crispy quail at roving pop-up LihoLiho Yacht Club won our hearts. Chef Ravi Kapur grew up in Hawaii, and uses the Aloha State's international prism — drawing from Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean cuisines — to create his ever-shifting menu. It's seen in the quail, which is deep-fried in a crispy-crunchy topping and deliciously juicy inside. The glaze changes a little bit each time he cooks it, but the night we popped in, the quail was doused in a sticky honey sauce, enhanced with an umami kick with tamari, fish sauce, garlic, and Korean chili powder. Kapur's looking for a brick-and-mortar spot for his pop-up, and we hope the bird gets a permanent spot.

BEST NEW RESTAURANT
RICH TABLE
199 Gough St., 355-9085
RichTableSF.com

Occasionally a restaurant springs into being fully formed, like Momotaro, the boy in Japanese folklore found floating downstream in a peach. Rich Table, which opened in late July 2012 in Hayes Valley under the leadership of husband-and-wife team Evan and Sarah Rich, is such a restaurant. Its playful take on California comfort food was enough reason for the early buzz: Items like house-made sardine potato chips, yeasty doughnuts dusted with mushroom powder, and "dirty hippies" (a shot of buttermilk panna cotta layered with wheatgrass puree and topped with seeds and sprouts) show the delicate balance between innovative fine dining and casual cuisine. But more importantly, from the outset, it was a restaurant with an ineffable sense of atmosphere. Rich Table is one of those rare restaurants where everything — food, service, décor, drinks — comes together in just the right way. Despite the fact that it's been on the top of everyone's list for more than a year, it still feels neighborhood-y and welcoming. Reservations can be hard to come by, but we love showing up early, taking a seat at the bar, and sipping a cocktail from bartender Buffalo Lograsso as we see what the culinary team has dreamed up that day.

BEST BRUNCH DRINK
CANDIED BEET MIMOSA AT BAR TARTINE
561 Valencia, 487-1600
BarTartine.com

Urban legend has it that the mimosa as a brunch drink was invented in San Francisco by Alfred Hitchcock back in the 1950s. Whether or not that story's true, 50 years later the mimosa has advanced far beyond

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Little Griddle

Joseph Geha

BEST STUNT EATING

BY TAMARA PALMER

San Francisco is a world center of hyperlocal, organic, artisan food. It's a place where fresh produce is revered and treated like pure art and restaurants are proud to proclaim the use of the most sustainable, humanely treated, and supremely coddled ingredients. But we also know how to dabble and even revel in supremely wrong cuisine, a kind of digestive sport where the trashiest specimens barely fit for human consumption ends up splashed on the feeds of Facebook and Instagram like some crazy fish caught out of the ocean with bare hands on a wild dare. And that's why this is a city where there are at least two places where one can attempt the feat of eating a donut burger, a dignity-defying concoction of heart-stopping meat and sweets. At **Little Griddle** (1400 Market, 864-4292, LittleGriddleSF.com), square, glazed doughnuts frame a beef patty crowned with apple-smoked bacon and American cheese. It's appropriately titled Lucifer for the hell it's likely to inflict on your stomach. **Over at Straw** (203 Octavia Blvd., 431-3663, StrawSF.com), an eatery built entirely on modern carnival fare that surpasses the typical fair favorites to almost disgusting degrees (hello, cinnamon Sriracha buffalo wings with cinnamon cream), the so-called Ringmaster sports round sinkers made in-house with a cheddar cheese-covered burger. Straw offers the options of adding bacon or a fried egg, or making it a "double-double" with two meats and four donuts, God help your soul.

the usual orange juice and champagne to the candied beet mimosa at Bar Tartine. The unusual drink came about by accident about a year ago, when chef/fermenter extraordinaire Cortney Burns was making a candied beet tart and had a bunch of leftover beet-flavored simple syrup that she didn't want to waste. She first thought to make jelly, but then added it to a dry Hungarian sparkling wine for a brunch cocktail — and now she candies beets (with a hint of fennel, black peppercorns, a bay leaf, anise seeds, star anise, and lemon juice) just to get the liquid they produce. The final drink is a deep, translucent ruby red, with a faint earthy flavor that gives the mimosa another dimension besides its usual one-note sweetness.

BEST DEEP-FRIED MONSTROSITY

THE TRIPLE PLAY AT BATTER UP

888 Geneva, 205-6032

We've always had a soft spot for corn dogs, but all too often they're a disappointment: either flaccid or over-fried, and overwhelmingly salty. The frymasters at Batter Up in the Excelsior have perfected the art of the corn dog. For starters, you don't have to go with a hot dog — you have your pick of sausages ranging from chicken-apple to Louisiana hot link (of course, Evergood all-beef frankfurters are available for purists). Then there's the batter, which is just crunchy enough and faintly sweet from cornmeal. The menu

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has deep-fried Oreos and candy bars, and there's even a vegetarian option with cheese instead of a hot dog, but the truly brave should order the "Triple Play," a monstrous hydra of a corn dog with three meats inside.

BEST FEAT OF CULINARY STRENGTH

THE CHALLENGE AT PHO GARDEN

2109 Clement, 379-8677
PhoGardenSF.com

When it comes to pho, we're usually satisfied by a "small" order and overwhelmed by a large. So we're probably not the best candidates to take The Challenge at Pho Garden, wherein contestants must eat 2 pounds of rice noodles, 2 pounds of combination beef and tripe, and 4 quarts of broth in less than an hour to get a free meal and their photo on the wall (though, truth be told, you don't have to finish the broth; just the meat and the noodles). The restaurant estimates that between 3,000 and 5,000 hopefuls have attempted the challenge in the four years it has been offered, and only 300 have succeeded. We hate to think about the effects of 2 pounds of rice noodles on the intestinal tract.

BEST CENTRAL AMERICAN IMPORT

POLLO CAMPERO

2740 Mission, 401-8226
Campero.com

Before Pollo Campero opened in San Francisco in late 2012, the closest outlet of the massively popular Guatemalan chicken chain was in Southern California, and rumors abounded of an underground fried chicken importing and distribution network. Thankfully, now all would-be bootleggers need to do is head to the new sit-down restaurant on Mission Street. The secret to Pollo Campero's cult status is the fried chicken, which has been marinated in a proprietary herb, garlic, and citrus mix for 12 hours for an addictive final product that tastes fresh and refreshingly non-greasy. Grilled chicken, yucca fries, empanadas, flan, and other Central American favorites round out the menu, but the lines out the door around dinnertime every night are for the signature bird.

BEST EDUCATIONAL HAPPY HOUR

FATTED CALF CHARCUTERIE

320 Fell, 400-5614
FattedCalf.com

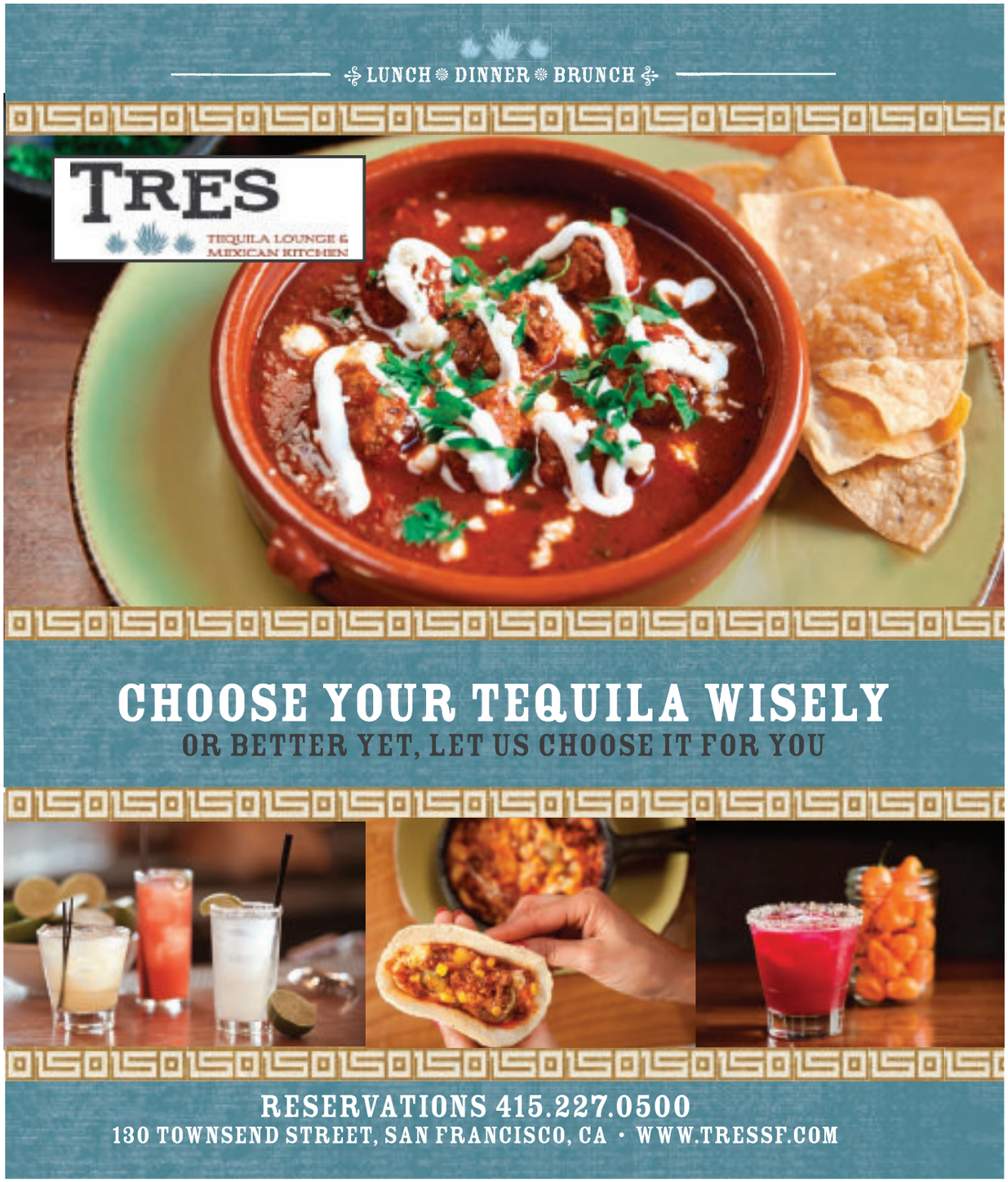
San Francisco is crazy about live butchery demonstrations — they're practically a spectator sport at foodie events, and at Fatted Calf, cocktail hour entertainment. Step into Hayes Valley upscale butcher shop on any Wednesday between 5:30 and 7 p.m. to see the skilled staff break down portions, halves, or whole pigs. As you watch them use hacksaws and boning knives to deftly slice between meat cuts — explaining what they're doing along the way, of course, and in the process giving you a better idea of where your meat comes from in relation to the animal — you can peruse the deli counter, sip local wine and beer, and nibble on salty meats. Make sure to pick up a few of the excellent cured meat sticks for later snacking.

BEST-LOOKING FOOD TRUCK

DEL POPOLO

DelPopoloSF.com

Jon Darsky, the man behind Del Popolo, the Ryan Gosling of San Francisco food trucks, spent $180,000 to repurpose a 20-foot shipping container and fill it with a two-and-a-half ton, Italian-made, wood-fired pizza oven that reaches 800 degrees and cooks pizzas in a minute. Not wanting to hide the investment behind corrugated metal, Darsky had the brilliant idea to cover one side of the shipping container in glass doors that allow hungry visitors to watch the action going down inside the stainless steel-lined prep kitchen. The truck is visually stunning, and produces similarly attractive, authentically Neapolitan thin-crust pizzas.



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FOOD & DINING

BEST INSIDER BREAKFAST

THE REBEL WITHIN AT CRAFTSMAN AND WOLVES

746 Valencia, 913-7713
Craftsman-Wolves.com

It looks innocent enough on first glance: a sausage, chive, Asiago, and Parmesan cheese-speckled muffin calmly sitting on the counter at chef William Werner's stylized patisserie Craftsman and Wolves. But it's not called The Rebel Within for nothing. Bite in and a cascade of salty egg yolk flows out, thanks to the inclusion of a soft-boiled egg inside. Fork and knife is probably the best approach if you care about the shirt you're wearing. The team only gets in one batch per day, and when they're gone, they're gone. Get there early.

BEST EXCUSE TO NAP AT WORK

DELI BOARD

1058 Folsom, 552-7687
DeliBoardSF.com

The ideal workday lunch is full of protein, fresh vegetables, and other brain food that keeps you powering through the inevitable afternoon mental dip. But there's an exception to every rule, and here that exception is the Boca sandwich from Deli Board. The massive sub has an unholy combination of pastrami, brisket, and corned beef, all packed inside a French roll. Along for the ride is an (un)healthy portion of Muenster cheese, brown mustard, and the establishment's proprietary, piquant "board sauce." Altogether it is a masterpiece of sandwich-making, and well worth the toll it will take on your 2 to 4 p.m. productivity.

BEST PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK LIKE A BIG SHOT

CAPO'S

641 Vallejo, 986-8998
SFCapos.com

New or old, few places capture the Platonic ideal of how mob-run 1930s Italian red sauce joints might have looked and felt as well as Capo's. Owner and pizza mastermind Tony Gemignani's restaurant is both opulent and comfortable, decorated with old bricks, vibrant red leather booths, and whiskey barrels. Here, you are the boss and you get treated as such with some of San Francisco's best renditions of classic Italian fare like Chicken Vesuvio, linguine and clams, or one of several pies named after famous mob bosses like the Sam Giancana ($26-$28, tomato sauce, mozzarella, provolone, house honey calabrese sausage, Chicago Italian sausage, garlic, oregano, romano) in variations that include deep dish, cast iron pan, stuffed, or cracker-thin crust. Don't miss out on bar manager Elmer Mejicanos' exceptional whiskey cocktails like the Wise Guy ($12, Wild Turkey Rye Whiskey, fresh lemon, cracked white pepper, orange marmalade, agave nectar, fresh oregano).

BEST CHICKEN STRIPS

CHUBBY NOODLE

570 Green, 361-8850
TheChubbyNoodle.com

This was the year that fried chicken really found a stronghold here, but for all the variations, not many places have embraced the simple white meat chicken strip. It's a shame, because strips are easier to eat and share with friends, and while white meat's lack of skin is admittedly a detriment, the increased surface area of a strip allows for more fried goodness. At Chubby Noodle, a pop-up inside North Beach dive Amante, the buttermilk-brined and fried wings are good, but the chicken fingers are the star of the show. The meat stays juicy and has a shattering crust. Plus, they come in a cute popcorn bucket.

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Anna Latino

BEST PLACE TO CHANNEL YOUR INNER CAVEMAN

KRONNERBURGER

2379 Mission, 656-9871
KronnerBurger.com

"Rare and salty" are the main attributes advertised on the menu at Kronnerburger, Chef Chris Kronner's hamburger pop-up. And it's not an exaggeration: This is the type of burger that causes juices to run down your hand and into your sleeve when you bite into it. The burger itself satisfies on a primal level, but you can take it one step further by ordering it with marrow, which comes with full-on pieces of cow bone protruding from the serving tray like something you'd find scattered on the cave floor in a scene from a PBS Neanderthal re-creation. Dig out the gray, beefy paste with the wooden stick that comes with it, spread it on your burger, and celebrate your place at the top of the food chain.

and Branch, a rum flight at Hobson's Choice, three whiskey flights at any one time at Southpaw BBQ, and flights of wine and IPA just about anywhere. We endorse them all, because flights make being discriminating lots more fun. But it's the beignet flight at Brenda's French Soul Food that triumphs, hands down. A hybrid between a doughnut and a fancy Hot Pocket, the four beignets — plain, chocolate, Granny Smith apple and the inimitable crawfish — are a required start to brunch, as mandatory as the watermelon iced tea. And they lead to the best worst feeling in the world: Oh crap, I'm full, and my shrimp & grits hasn't even arrived.

BEST MUSEUM FOOD

ASIAN ART MUSEUM

200 Larkin, 581-3500
AsianArt.org

While most museum-goers flee galleries during lunchtime, the Asian Art Museum enjoys an influx of noontime visitors, and many didn't come for the world-class collection. People who work in the Civic Center walk in with authority, bypassing the ticket office and heading straight into Café Asia, where Chef Melinda Quirino offers a seasonal menu at reasonable prices. Offerings include steamed fish wrapped

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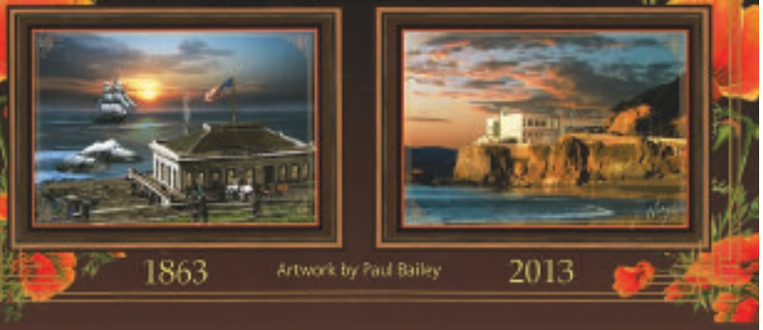

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3138 Noriega St., 664-2472
PollyAnn.com

Most of San Francisco's trendier ice cream parlors are located east of Twin Peaks, but for all the indie cred you get from waiting in line at Humphry Slocombe or Bi-Rite, they don't offer the adventure you'll find at Polly Ann Ice Cream in the Outer Sunset. If you can't decide which of their dozens of exotic flavors to get, a big wheel on the wall can decide for you. To make it interesting, you're required to buy whatever the wheel lands on — even if it's Durian. Nay, especially if it's Durian. Welcome to a brave new world of flavor.

BEST CULINARY DISRUPTERS

BY ANNA ROTH

San Francisco may be the undisputed leader in tech innovation, but the city's food scene has moved beyond farm-to-table ingredients and is causing its own distruption. Witness the astronomic rise of **Mission Chinese Food**'s Danny Bowien, a young chef who decided to start experimenting with Sichuan peppercorns and riffs on Chinese food like kung pao pastrami at a Mission pop-up a few years back (2234 Mission St., 863-2800. MissionChineseFood.com). He's now the darling of the national food media thanks to the opening of the second location of Mission Chinese Food on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and rumors have abounded of a potential third location in Paris. Then there's the dim sum-style California cuisine of **State Bird Provisions**, which put the 16-month-old Fillmore restaurant at the top of nearly every media outlet's list of best new restaurants of last year (1529 Fillmore, 795-1272. StateBirdSF.com). It also snagged a James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant in the country earlier this month, an award given for, among other things, a restaurant opened in 2012 that "is likely to have a significant impact on the industry in years to come." There's growing crossover with food and tech, too: **Good Eggs** (GoodEggs.com), a start-up grocery delivery service that connects local food producers with customers, has expanded to Brooklyn with more cities in the works. And with hip NYC chef April Bloomfield of the Spotted Pig and the Breslin taking over the **Tosca Cafe** (242 Columbus) later this year, we're seeing the East Coast begin to export talent here as well. Here's to more of New York and the rest of the world taking its culinary cues from us.

BEST FUNHOUSE SERVING SUSHI

KIKI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

1269 Ninth Ave., 661-5522
KikiSushi.com

The Inner Sunset doesn't lack for sushi restaurants, but none offer as much eye candy as Kiki Sushi. In the former location of House Restaurant, the front of Kiki's building is pleasingly cattywampus, with a *Dr. Caligari*-style slanted door and window. The style continues on the inside, with the high walls painted in yellows and purples, and plenty of framed prints from Hayao Miyazaki anime classics, particularly *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*. Most importantly, the sushi is reasonably priced and quite delicious, and somehow tastes even better when you eat under the comforting grin of *Totoro*'s Catbus.

BEST WHEEL OF CREAMY FORTUNE

BEST CARNIE FOOD

OFF THE GRID

339-5888
OffTheGridSF.com

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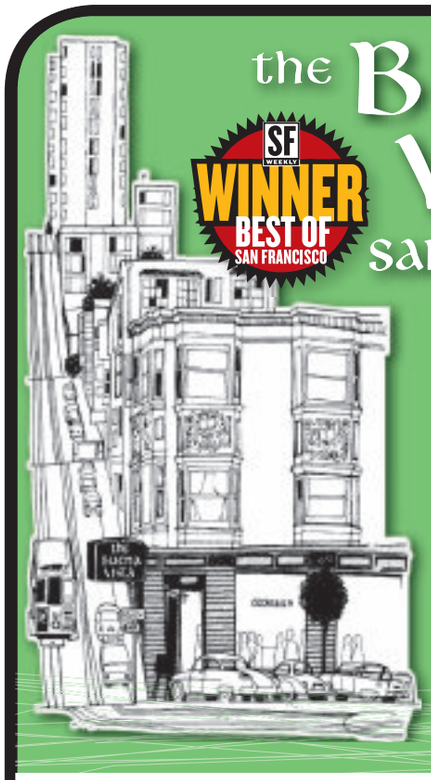

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FOOD & DINING

bring the community together through food. Most of the vendors accept plastic payment, but you should come with cash to tip the local talent. Beware of Bacon Bacon if you're planning to ride the Ferris wheel, and don't feed the elephant anything from Peter's Kettle Corn truck.

BEST CANDY SELECTION

THE CANDY STORE

1507 Vallejo St., 921-8000
TheCandyStoreSF.com

Have the shopkeepers at The Candy Store treat you to a complementary tasting or scoop you a pound of Licorice Rockies the next time you're in Russian Hill. Loyal customers can even book the candy bar or cart for events and shop online for their favorite treats. At The Candy Store, you'll find jars upon jars of circus candy and novelty sweets that will take you back to your first carnival. The shop features a huge selection of chocolates, gummies, licorice, and sours from around the world. We carnies are partial to the Carnival Pops and Abba-Zabas. And trust us: This place lives up to the ballyhoo.

BEST KINKY CAFE

WICKED GROUNDS

289 Eighth St., 503-0405
WickedGrounds.com

The cutest — and, to be fair, the only — BDSM coffeeshop in San Francisco can inevitably be found right next to Folsom Street. Wicked Grounds hosts an array of BDSM meetups, a gallery that cycles through kinky artists, a boutique, and a shelf of sex education books. They even sell Leland Carina's fetish greeting cards (one favorite is a whip-adorned thank-you note: "Thank you for beating me so well"). The nicest thing about WG is that it doesn't coast on its niche — it serves great food and offers free wi-fi, so non-perverts can enjoy the space, too.

BEST WAY TO COOK AND SERVE AN ENTIRE ANIMAL

THE WHOLE BEAST

816-1414
TheWholeBeast.com

If there were a "Truth in a Name" award, The Whole Beast would certainly be a contender. Chef John Fink commands a large Southern Pride smoker oven from which whole golden roasted animals emerge for sandwiches, wraps, or extreme and delicious dishes like porchetta nachos or on lamb poutine (fries, gravy, meat and cheese curds). You'll find the crew, including Fink's wife running the front of the house, at festivals around the year, and regularly at the Fort Mason and Picnic at the Presidio Off the Grid events with a different animal each week. Each animal is sourced from a local farm and every part of it is used deliciously.

BEST BURGER MENAGERIE

BELLY BURGER, FINS ON THE HOOF, FIVETENBURGER

TheBellyBurger.com
FinsOnTheHoof.com
Fivetenburger.com

It used to be that burgers only came from one animal: cow. And while beef still dominates the meat-on-bun genre, a few food truck chefs have pushed the burger into new territory without losing the essence of the all-American meal. At Belly Burgers, chef Tom Pizzica grinds fresh pork belly to create a Classic Belly Burger ($6 for one, $10 for any two; pork belly patty, fried pobalno and serrano pepper aioli, tomatillo relish, cotija cheese) that is so good you'll want to order them two at a time. While lamb can be a little funky in a burger, Fins on the Hoof chef Todd Middleton makes an exceptional grass-fed lamb burger ($10, salsa verde, feta, red onion, arugula, spicy mayo) that possess a textbook crust on the juicy meat patty. If you're looking for more for classic, chef Roland Robles'

BEST EXOTIC FOOD DELIVERY

BY ANNA ROTH

It's Tuesday night, you've opened a bottle of wine, and have Netflix queued up to binge-watch something delightful. All that's left is to order dinner in, but you're tired of the same old delivery options. These S.F. restaurants offer something outside the norm for those evenings when you want to explore the boundaries of a new cuisine but don't want to leave the cozy confines of the couch.

LERS ROS

Alligator, frog, rabbit, quail, boar, and other meats beyond the usual choices can be found on the menu at both locations of this beloved Thai restaurant. Though every time we try to order something new, we find it hard to stray from our standard order of duck larb and the crispy pork belly. (730 Larkin St., 931-6917 or 307 Hayes, 874-9661. LersRos.com.)

WING WINGS

You don't need a sporting event to eat chicken wings for dinner. Organic wings come doused in a variety of sauces at this small Lower Haight storefront. Try the Angry Korean sauce, replete with Korean chili paste and spotted with sesame seeds, or the Wing Wings sauce, a sweet, sticky, soy-and-molasses-based concoction fortified with chile, ginger, garlic, and rice vinegar. (422 Haight St., 834-5001. WingWingsSF.com.)

MISSION CHINESE FOOD

One of the OG pop-ups, the now-famous Chinese spot inside Lung Shan in the Mission has a menu that changes frequently. But you can expect the likes of lamb face noodle soup, stir-fried pork jowls, spicy octopus and lamb's tongue salad, along with regular tongue-tingling dishes like ma po tofu made with numbing Sichuan peppercorns. (2234 Mission St., 863-2800. MissionChineseFood.com)

HELMAND PALACE

Feel like Afghan food tonight? This Russian Hill restaurant will deliver specialties like kaddo (pumpkin baked with sugar and topped with beef sauce), mourgh challow (a take on chicken curry), and dwopiaza (marinated grilled lamb) within two miles. (2424 Van Ness Ave., 345-0072. HelmandPalaceSF.com.)

LITTLE NEPAL

Explore the world of momo dumplings, sizzling tandori, lamb and chicken curries, and more at this Nepalese spot, which delivers within four miles of its Bernal Heights location. (925 Cortland Ave., 643-3881. LittleNepalSF.com.)

Fivetenburger shows how good a beef burger can be when proper attention is paid to both the bun and patty. The masses agree: Long lines are par for the course, but those in the know will wait anyway.

BEST CLOWN CAR RESTAURANT

RICKYBOBBY

400 Haight
RickyBobbySF.com

The discomfort we're willing to endure to eat delicious food is remarkable. After a Muni trip or constitutional spent in the comfortable isolation of headphones and wide sidewalks, community seating can be shocking. Even so, San Franciscans will endure discomfort to eat delicious food, even if it means piling atop each other. Rickybobby in the Lower Haight doesn't take reservations and doesn't do take out, so if you want to experience their short rib lasagna or knockout double bacon cheeseburger, plan to squeeze into a bench seat and knock elbows with strangers. Unless you're too misanthropic to share benches with strangers, go, wait, cram, order, and eat. Make sure to get a side of sweet potato tots.

BEST WAY TO CATCH A BUZZ FROM YOUR TACO

TANGO & STACHE

TangoAndStache.com

You may reconsider drinking as your primary cocktail delivery system after trying the food at bar pop-up Tango & Stache. Chef Joshua Oakley finds inspiration for his tacos in drinks at the bar, with dishes like Negroni pork belly tacos, Wild Turkey rye whiskey pulled pork nachos, and rum milk punch-braised shoulder tacos. Oakley, a former cook at Bar Bambino, Michael Mina, and Gary Danko, got the idea after an accident left him with a broken foot and a lot of time away from the kitchen. He comes armed with a griddle to make each tortilla for the tacos to order and an assortment of boozy condiments like whiskey pickled peppers and vermouth salsa. Now you finally have a choice as to how you enjoy a delicious drink: in a taco or in a glass? We recommend both.

BEST SANDWICH OFF A TRUCK

MAYO & MUSTARD

MayoMustard.com

A sandwich off a truck may not seem super-exciting until you try Tony's BBQ tri-tip sandwich ($7 for 6-inch or $9 for 8-inch; sliced tri-tip steak, cheddar, BBQ sauce, horseradish sauce, mayo, lettuce, tomato, pickles, red onions, jalapeño, pepperoncini) from the Mayo and Mustard truck. Swathed in brown parchment paper, hot and drippy with shaved tri-tip and melted cheddar, the sandwich has a genius that lies in the truck's custom Dutch crunch bread. This bread provides a sturdy and flavorful foundation and has just the right heft: It's not so thick that the whole thing becomes a bread sandwich, nor so thin that it falls apart at the first bite, and its crusty top lives up to its name.

BEST DESSERT FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE

BUTTERMILK PIE FROM THE RIB WHIP

CedarhillSF.com/RibWhip

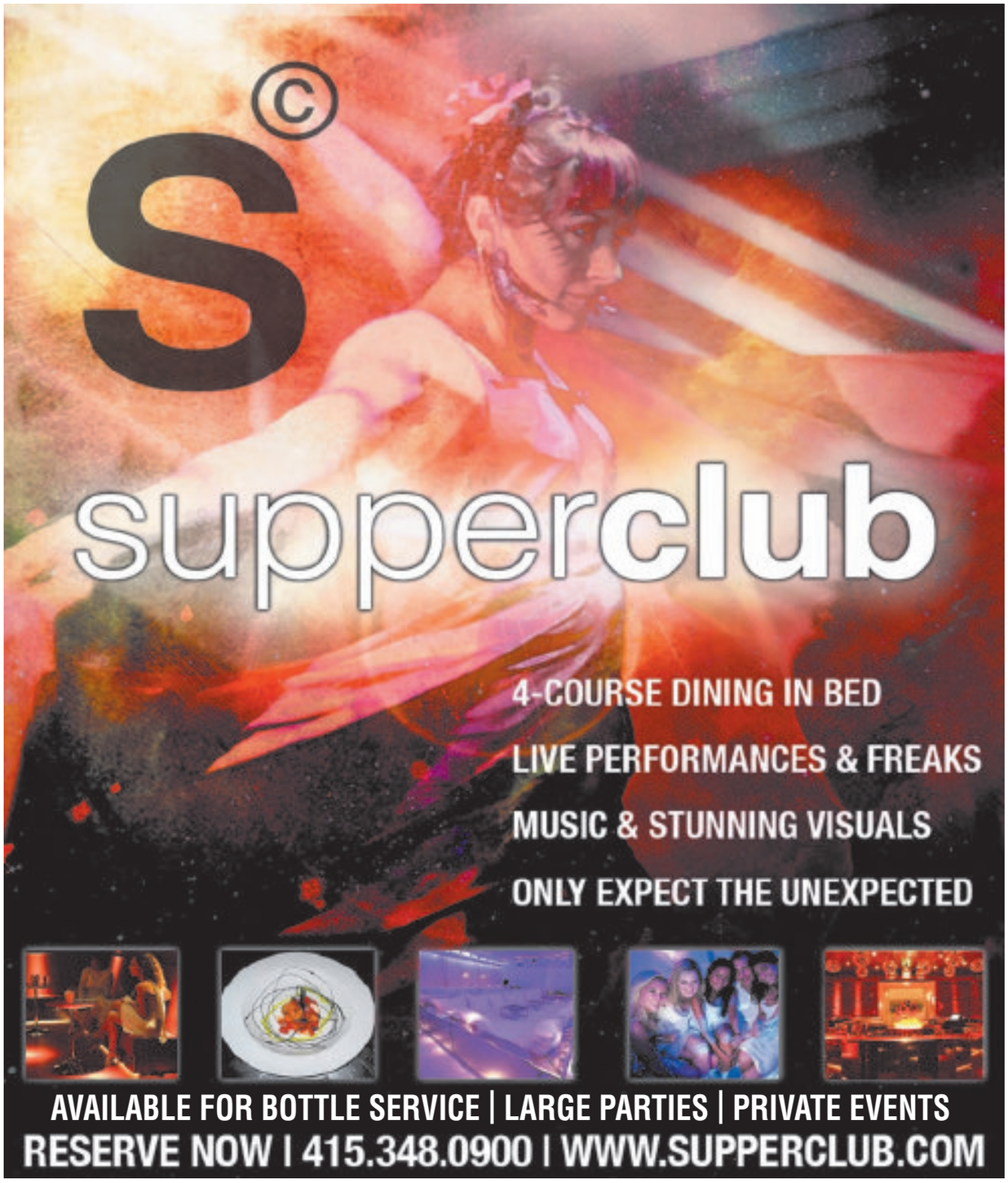
As you can probably tell from the name, Rib Whip doesn't specialize in dessert — but if the truck sold nothing but wedges of its Grandma Ruth's Buttermilk Pie ($5), there would still be a line. The graham cracker crust is the secret weapon, adding crispy texture and sporadic lightly salty bites that keep the whole thing from becoming too cloying. A light layer of buttermilk custard sits above the crust, silky and tangy and just as bold as you please. The pie is capped with a towering cloud of whipped cream that at first seems excessive until you have a bite, and realize that this is a dessert that you'll always have room for, no matter how much of the truck's barbecue you've already eaten.

Tofu Teriyaki Zen at KoJa Kitchen

Lou Bustamante

BEST THING MADE FROM ICE CREAM

THE ICE CREAM BAR'S NEW ORLEANS HANGOVER



815 Cole, 742-4932
TheIceCreamBarSF.com
While it may seem that Cole Valley's Ice Cream Bar has the Art Deco soda fountain aesthetic nailed, the malts and shakes themselves involve a kind of 19th century patent medicine. (Coca-Cola started out as a curative, after all.) The New Orleans Hangover — chicory coffee syrup, soda, Golden Eagle tincture and sweet cream ice cream — may not involve quite the alchemy of the Ice Cream Bar's phosphates and lactarts, but it's the perfect balance of rich sweetness and bite. It's like something your grandfather might dimly remember being served on a zeppelin in some alternative version of the forties.

BEST VEGAN FOOD TRUCK DISH

TOFU TERIYAKI ZEN AT KOJA KITCHEN

KojaKitchen.com
Delicious vegan fare and food trucks may seem like polar opposites, but while fatty and meaty describe the bulk of street food offerings, KoJa Kitchen, a truck that combines Korean and Japanese cuisine, successfully shows how delicious meat-free can be. Its Tofu Teriyaki Zen ($5.25) is composed of a glazed Portobello mushroom and tofu patty with a ring of pineapple and a pinch of shredded lettuce. While that description may not have you jumping out of the pork belly taco line, consider that this is no ordinary sandwich. The buns are two crisped discs of rice, somewhere in between the Japanese seasoned onigilly and the golden crisp rice found at the bottom of hot stone bowls of bibimbap, and are tender yet able to soak up sauces without collapsing. Even better is the satisfying tofu patty that doesn't even try to imitate meat. If you can't live without meat, add a side of Kamakizi Fries ($5.75, criss-cut fries, Korean BBQ beef, sautéed onions, kimchi, green onions, signature sauce, Japanese mayo), but chances are you won't even miss it.

BEST 'SIDE'SHOW

PLOW

1299 18th St., 821-7569
EatAtPlow.com
As good as a main dish can be, sometimes the sides simply shine. Luckily at Plow, you don't need to commit to one dish as listed on the menu — feel free to mix-and-match select portions of some main courses as add-ons to create your own personalized, diverse breakfast or lunch. The crispy potatoes have skins that shatter on the tongue, the homemade pork sausage patties are sweet and just a tad spicy, the corn millet muffin packs tons of flavor and texture, and the "Staff Pick-Me-Up" is a clear winner with housemade peanut butter and Potrero Hill honey on a toasted nine-grain muffin. They'll even make one-off versions of their famous lemon ricotta or Annie's almond flour pancakes.

BEST GUT-BUSTING LUNCH

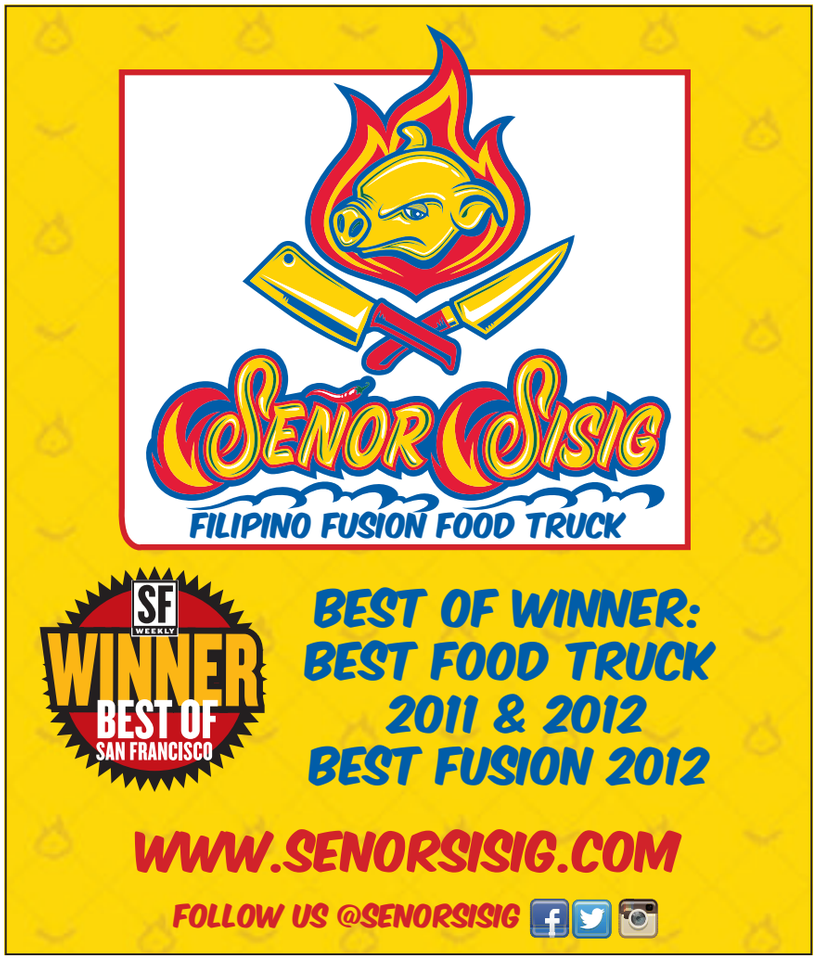
AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE'S MAC N CHEESE GRILLED CHEESE

2400 Harrison, 926-5076
1 South Park, 243-0107
TheAmericanSF.com
There's comfort food, and then there's a vortex of comfort food inside more comfort food. A grilled cheese sandwich made with macaroni-and-cheese might be the very manifestation of a San Francisco foodie's id. Gooey, crunchy, and guaranteed to ruin your appetite for the remainder of the day, the sandwich has a simplicity that proves that all that umami nonsense is just a distraction from living out your inner 6-year-old's dream — and all for only $8. How has no one thought of this before? Should you chow down at the Mission location once occupied by Café Gratitude, you get to say, "I am decadent" as you stuff your face.

BEST PLACE TO BUY EXOTIC CANNED FISH

PARKSIDE FARMERS' MARKET

555 Taraval, 681-5563
ParksideFarmersMarket.com
This decades-old Sunset establishment isn't really a farmers' market — though it's best known for its produce and Mediterranean fare. But it's a treasure chest for those who crave exotic canned fish. Sardines, herring, mackerel from Morocco, Lithuania, Latvia; they've got it all. Even some where they write in Cyrillic on something that we're assuming is fish. It's also easy on the wallet. If you're preparing for the apocalypse, or just want to stock up on cans for when the rapture cuts off access to any and all markets, farmers, or otherwise, this is your place.



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BEST POUTINE

BY THE DAPPER DINER

Poutine, the eastern Canadian equivalent of In-N-Out's animal-style fries, is a pile of thin- to medium-cut french fries crispy enough to withstand a ladle's worth of brown gravy, on which a generous serving of crumbled cheese curds are dropped, melting slightly from the heat of the fries and gravy. It is the 2 a.m. greasy bar food for which you would kill your best friend. It is the salty and satisfying snack that tastes like ambrosia as you shove it down your gullet, drunk in a smelly, sticky-floored bar while Rush's *Greatest Hits* plays. It is the regret that punches the inside of your stomach when you wake up the next morning. After extensive research, here are our favorite examples of it in San Francisco.

JASPER'S CORNER TAP & KITCHEN

Jasper's attacks poutine in an interesting way: by giving you choices. Offered on their "Fries Menu," diners can choose between thin cut, thick cut, and sweet potato fries. The choose-your-own-poutine adventure doesn't end there, as you can season the fries with sea salt; smoked paprika; garlic, salt, and pepper; or truffle, parmesan, and herb. Lastly, there are the actual poutine options of topping the fries with brown gravy with mushroom, smoked cheese fondue, or a "chef's choice," which is similar to a salsa topping. In a traditional-enough version with thin fries seasoned with sea salt and topped with brown gravy and mushrooms, the fries were crisp and nicely cooked, and the salty beef gravy was a nice thickness.

SAUCE ON BELDEN PLACE

Nestled on an alleyway reminiscent of France, Sauce serves what's probably the closest to the simple, traditional poutine you can find in San Francisco. It's served with a chicken-based gravy that's peppery, salty, and the right thickness to both cover the fries and soak through the pile of them. The mild heat of the gravy is a welcome addition to an S.F. summer's cooler weather. Sauce also garners bonus points for layering some of the mozzarella curds between the warm french fries, while placing another layer on top. Because at the end of a long day, having gooey cheese covering as many fries as possible can be a very good thing.

WAYFARE TAVERN

Switching from an off-the-menu item to an on-the-menu item depending on the day, the Wayfare Tavern's poutine builds on its terrific french fries by adding various types of gravy depending on what's available in the kitchen. One night, the kitchen used braised lamb neck and mirepoix for the gravy, which gave some texture and bolstered the gravy's flavor. The mozzarella curds are melted on top of the dish, making it resemble a snowcapped mountain of fries. Much-maligned truffle oil is often drizzled on the fries to add an extra oomph in flavor, but during truffle season the poutine comes with shaved truffles to accompany the oil. Rumor has it Tyler Florence has plans to make the poutine available year-round, swapping out ingredients to make it seasonally appropriate, such as using oxtail or fava beans.

CITIZEN'S BAND

A base of crispy fries topped with a brown, umami-rich wild mushroom gravy, the Citizen's Band poutine is generous in size and flavor. While the gravy's flavor is reminiscent of an earthier version cream of mushroom soup, it has a perfect medium consistency and pairs nicely with the massive pieces of delicate, melt-in-your-mouth pork belly that tip this from the realm of a snack to a full-on course that will sate your hunger. The soft cheese curds are made in-house using the magic of milk and citric acid, and the whole thing is covered with a light shaving of pecorino.

PER DIEM

This poutine is the best of the bunch, centered around fries that are cooked slightly more than the restaurant's regular fries, allowing them to stand up better to the oxtail gravy. The rich gravy is thickened by the meat's collagen and fat, and is good enough to eat alone, with little tender shreds of meat adding a depth of flavor. It manages to straddle the line between being too thin and runny and too thick and gelatinous; it's able to move between the fries to coat various layers in the fry pile, but it also does not migrate completely to the bottom of the serving dish. The crumbled curds come from Petaluma's Achadinha Cheese Company and soften the heat of the dish while still retaining a nice squeak when bitten.

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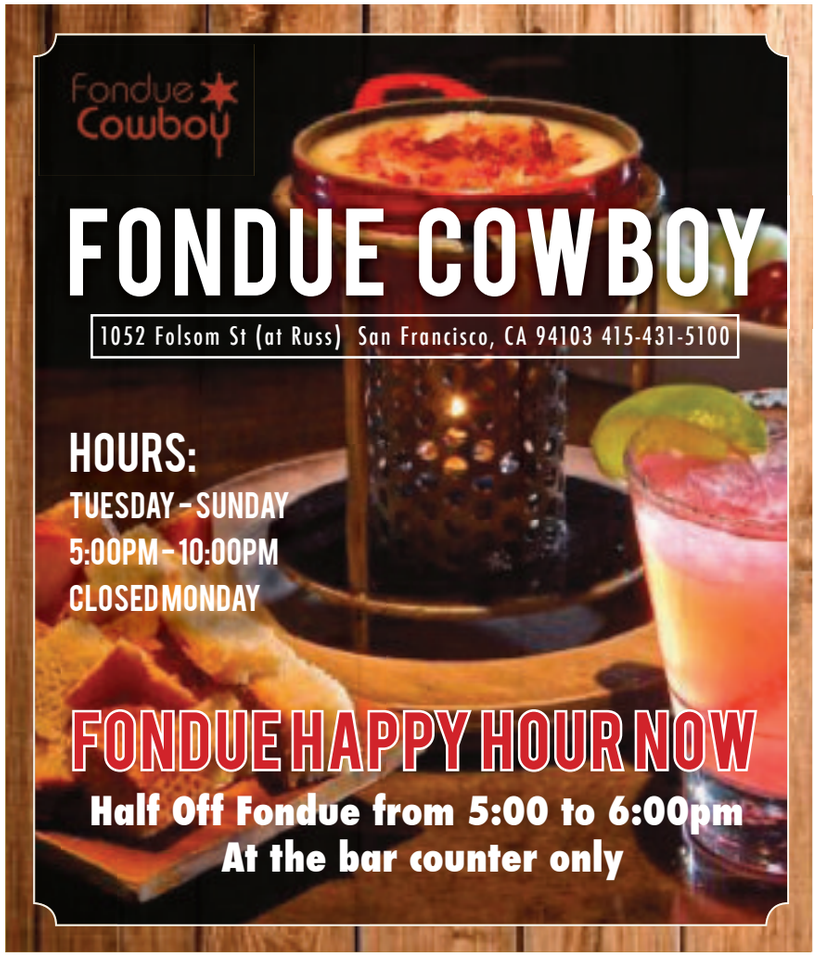

BEST MUSLIM CHINESE RESTAURANT

OLD MANDARIN ISLAMIC CHINESE

3132 Vicente, 564-3481

Like a beacon in the fog, this storefront restaurant is a warm destination in the chilly Outer Sunset. In fact, there are delightful warm pots, which are communal soup dishes that boil on your table. Or if you prefer hot instead of warm, try the "extremely hot pepper." This dish lives up to its title and manages to be both flavorful and spicy as hell. Other favorites include the cumin-heavy Mandarin Lamb, meat or vegetable pancakes, and, if you know the lingo, other things that may or may not be on the menu.

BEST PLACE TO FIND COMICALLY OVERSIZE CARROTS

MANILA ORIENTAL MARKET

4175 Mission, 337-7272

There's much to like at this Excelsior mainstay — including remarkably inexpensive beer and live seafood. But the most eye-catching feature is its cudgel-sized carrots. These Chernobyl vegetables often clock in at four inches wide at the base and more than a foot long. Toting one around inspires disbelieving expressions at an overtly phallic object seemingly ripped straight from low-grade adult films. The carrots, incidentally, are only 39 cents a pound — which only buys you half a carrot. Also, they're sweet and juicy. Hell, even that dialogue is ripped from low-grade adult films.

BEST-PRICED FARMERS' MARKET

ALEMANY FARMERS' MARKET

100 Alemany, 647-9423

The old real estate adage is that it's all about location, location, location. And so it is with the real-estate upon which farmers' markets sit. After all, the very same vendors often hawk their wares at numerous different locales. But it's always appreciably cheaper at the Alemany Farmers' Market, which is open on Saturdays from 6 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. and is on a scrap of land in the shadow of Highway 280 where a swap meet holds court the following day. With the money you save, you could come back on Sunday and splurge at that swap meet.

BEST PLACE TO DRINK INSIDE A GROCERY STORE

STEEP BREW AT WHOLE FOODS

450 Rhode Island, 552-1155
WholeFoodsMarket.com/stores/PotreroHill

With its cushy armchairs, polished cement floor, and lacquered reclaimed wooden tables, the bar inside Whole Foods Potrero Hill feels corporate and intentionally unassuming, a sort of Starbucks for beer fans. But then you look a little closer and notice that the bar has 16 beers on tap, most of them local, hard-to-find brews from places like Pacific Brew Labs, Almanac Brewing Co., Linden Street Brewing, Upright Brewing, and others — you can also drink any beer you can buy in the store upstairs for a small fee. Plenty of by-the-glass wines and a small, healthyish snack selection round out the menu. Unfortunately, or fortunately for your bank account, you can't actually do your shopping with a pint in hand, but the place does offer a breather from the organic-obsessed masses.

BEST CIRCUS-LIKE RESTAURANT THAT ISN'T TRYING TO BE A CIRCUS AT ALL

TOMMY'S JOYNT

1101 Geary, 775-4216
TommysJoynt.com

From the outside, with that neon sign and garish, over-painted exterior, Tommy's Joynt looks like a haven for freaks and weirdos. Then you go through those heavy double doors and find a series of interconnected rooms bursting with random kitsch from the better part of a century: Lots of new and old beer signs, dusty old German oil paintings, beer steins galore, and various pieces of Bay Area memorabilia. (There's even an autographed photo of Metallica hanging from the bar.) So, okay, Tommy's Joynt does come across like some kind of freak-culture circus. But this outpost on Geary and Van Ness is actually an incredibly practical watering hole and eatery. Where else can you get a huge pastrami sandwich for $6 at 1:30 a.m. — or a house mixed drink for all of $3.50? The

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BEST BREAKFAST SANDWICHES

BY JOSH LESKAR

If you want to get technical about it, *any* sandwich consumed first thing in the morning is a "breakfast sandwich." But we know what you're really after as you roll groggily out of bed: oozing, melted cheese, fluffy scrambled or fried eggs, optional (but not really) meat of choice, all encased by sweet, glorious carbohydrates. Whether to cure your hangover woes or simply start the day off heartily in ideal proportions of fat, protein, and carbs, here are the our five favorite breakfast sandwiches in the city.

4505 MEATS

The famous "Best Damn Cheeseburger" helped get 4505 Meats on the map, but the Bacon Maple Breakfast Sausage Sandwich is another farmers' market staple not to be missed. This heavenly, fatty sausage patty is studded with sage and red pepper flakes to give it a hint of a kick, drips with sweet maple syrup flavor, comes topped with griddled egg and a fistful of greens, and is served on a toasted, buttered, and sesame seed-dotted brioche roll that soaks up all of the excess grease. And by "excess," we mean perfect amount. (4505Meats.com.)

DEVIL'S TEETH BAKING CO.

Sure, 45th and Noriega is way out there for most, but make the trek to this surfer's paradise and reward yourself with one humongous buttermilk biscuit-wich stuffed with two scrambled eggs, applewood smoked bacon and cheddar cheese. Remember that Burger King commercial featuring the man with tiny hands? That's how you'll feel holding this bad boy. Wrapped to go in foil, enjoy it in the adorable parklet or walk four blocks to the beach for breakfast with a view, and don't worry about eating again until dinner. (3876 Noriega, 683-5533. DevilsTeethBakingCompany.com.)

THE STATION

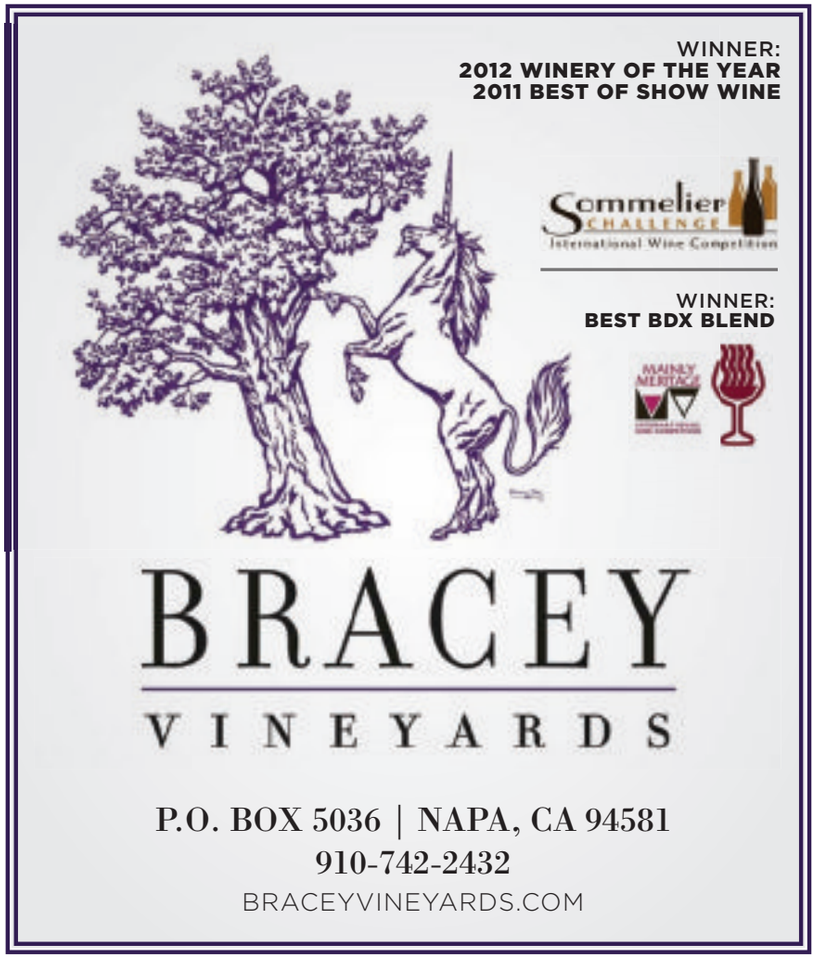
Reach for the aptly named egg croissant at this North Beach cafe: fluffy, organic eggs are cooked in a circular mold so that the resulting "omelette" sits between the two halves of the toasted, flaky croissant from GoodyGoody. Imported manchego cheese sticks to the bottom, and we added on Spanish jam for a salty switch from the norm (Nueske's bacon is available as well). Pro tip: Ask for a bigger plate. Bits of croissant are likely to fly across the table toward innocent diners. (596 Pacific, 291-0690. TheStationSF.com.)

UNIVERSAL CAFE

During the week, this Mission hot spot serves up the fried egg sandwich on a poppy seed kaiser roll, but if you can make it through to the weekend, grab one at brunch instead. A homemade English muffin is toasted until its edges are cracker-crisp, while the center remains soft and fluffy. Cheddar and a generous portion of local-cured ham are lightened up with a chervil vinaigrette-dressed avocado and endive salad, all of which is served with a side of greens. It's on the pricey side at $14, but the organic and sustainable quality of each and every ingredient makes it worth every penny. (2814 19th St., 821-4608. UniversalCafe.net.)

REVEILLE

Occasionally, prematurely popped yolks or excess fats in sandwiches cause a soggy bun to separate and break even before we bite in. Here, a protective base coat is layered with thick-cut bacon, kale, leeks and gruyere cheese on the bottom slice of toasted Della Fattoria levain. The top is served toad-in-the-hole style, with a cracked egg sitting atop voided center, sprinkled with sea salt, calling to us with a "come-hither" wink from that golden cyclops of a yolk-eye and keeping the bottom crisp and toasty. (200 Columbus, 789-6258. ReveilleCoffee.com.)



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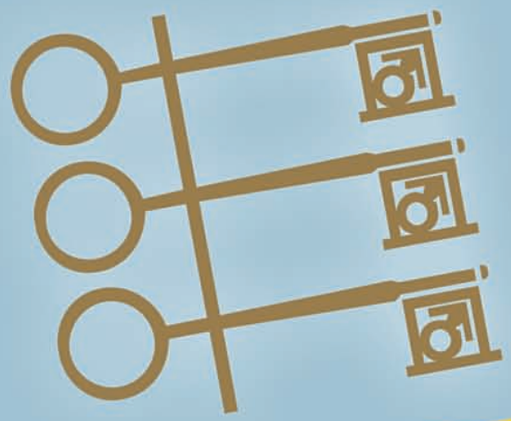

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salty meat-and-carb-heavy menu doesn't offer a ton of variety, but solid fare at bargain prices is the *raison d'etre* here. The oddball décor is just there to keep you amused while waiting in line for it. their length. Activity in the dining room stops as diners watch. Then, as quickly as he came, the chef is gone, and you're left with an entirely new appreciation for the noodles on the plate in front of you.

BEST ELUSIVE BEER

BY ANNA ROTH

There's a dividing line between beer drinkers: those who have tried Pliny the Younger, and those who have not. The triple IPA made by **Russian River Brewing Company** (725 Fourth St., Santa Rosa, (707) 545-2337. RussianRiverBrewing.com) is the stuff of legend, a serious brew with 10.5 percent alcohol content that's only available in very limited quantities during the first few weeks of February. People talk about Pliny the Younger in hushed, reverential tones; they only share their sources of it with people they trust. Because kegs of the stuff usually go within an hour or two, finding and consuming Pliny the Younger takes both dedication and elbow grease.

First, you have to locate a bar that's pouring it, not an easy task. Some announce their Pliny the Younger availability on the S.F. Beer Week event schedule (its release usually coincides with Beer Week), but many only through word of mouth (Twitter and beer-nerd message boards help). Once you do find the lucky bar, be prepared to wait in line — sometimes for hours.

But once you deal with all the shenanigans to get it, there's no doubt about it: Pliny the Younger is a beautiful beer. It's a clear, golden color, and tastes strongly of citrus and hops without blowing out your palate. It's also surprisingly light and refreshing, considering the amount of alcohol in it. Like a well-made wine, you can tell how much technical craftsmanship went into the making of it — a large part of the reason only a limited quantity is made each year.

Russian River Brewing used to let people walk away with glass growlers that would later sell on eBay for upwards of $100. Now, growlers are no longer allowed. But the beer's exclusivity is part of what makes it so special. After all, there's nothing that aficionados of all stripes like more than exclusivity.

BEST RESTAURANT FLOOR SHOW

M.Y. CHINA

845 Market, fourth floor, 580-3001
MYChinaSF.com

The open kitchen at M.Y. China, celebrity chef Martin Yan's upscale Chinese restaurant at the top of Westfield Mall near Union Square, provides a show in itself. Through the glassed-off walls, you can watch the chefs engage in a dance of pulling noodles, forming dumplings, wok-tossing dishes, and generally showing off their culinary acrobatics. But the real entertainment hasn't started yet. At a certain point in the night, a chef — usually Master Noodle Puller Tony Wu, world champion noodle-puller — emerges on the restaurant floor holding a thick coil of noodle dough. He then proceeds to toss, flip, swirl, and otherwise expertly handle the noodles like a cowboy at a rodeo, stretching them to several times

BEST STAYCATION TO LATIN AMERICA

LOLINDA

2518 Mission, 550-6970
LolindaSF.com

Argentina may be a 14-hour flight from San Francisco, but that doesn't mean you can't take a quick jaunt to South America for a great piece of grilled meat. Chef Alejandro Morgan at Argentine-style grill Lolinda (owned by the same team behind Beretta and Starbelly) is serving up wood-grilled meats, empanadas, and ceviches so good you might spontaneously tango. Add to that bar manger Chris Lane's exceptional cocktail like the The Devil's Backbone ($10, rye whiskey, Lagavulin Scotch Whisky, Averna amaro, Gran Classico, Angostura bitters, orange bitters, orange peel) or the Oaxacan Cross ($10, mezcal, ruby port, lime, pineapple, ginger, maraschino, orange peel) and suddenly the real South American country has a lot to live up to.

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ELENA SANDERS

PAGE 104

BEST HUMAN PETTING ZOO

FROLIC AT THE STUD

399 Ninth, 863-6623
NeonBunny.com/music

Bathed in black light and filled with colorful and glowing objects, DJ Neonbunny's monthly club Frolic is a mix of people (mostly but not wholly gay/boys) in full fursuits, others of assorted genders and persuasions in partial animal costumes, and plenty of non-costumed folks who are there to dance and rub and nuzzle with the fursuits — or do nothing but dance, as Neonbunny's sets always set tailfeathers a-shakin'. If you're a newbie to this joyous event, many fursuiters will be happy to let you dance with them and pet them. Just be sure to ask politely.

BEST SUNDAY PARTY GUARANTEED TO RUIN YOUR MONDAY

HONEY SOUNDSYSTEM AT HOLY COW

1535 Folsom, 621-6087
TheHolyCow.com

Walk by the Holy Cow Monday through Saturday, and you'll probably get the impression that it's just another Folsom Street Top 40 pick-up club. Not so on Sundays, when forward-thinking queer DJ collective Honey Soundsystem transforms the space for its weekly residency. Lavish decorations and a top-notch cast of international guest DJs (recent players have included the likes of Silent Servant, DJ Sprinkles, and Prosumer) add up to what might very well be the best party in the city — i.e., a wild night there is worth whatever hangover you end up with on Monday.

BEST NOISEMAKER

MIGHTY

119 Utah, 762-0151
Mighty119.com

Mighty has always had it better than most clubs. Situated on the edge of Potrero Hill and SOMA, its remote but accessible location allows it to crank the volume without pissing off the neighbors. And for a long time that was enough; its excellent '70s-issue RLA sound system belted out the jams but was notorious for inducing ear fatigue. Not so with the club's freshly installed Avalon CLUB.two by EAW Soundsystem, which somehow manages to bump louder while still sounding as clear as high-end studio monitors.

BEST HAPPY HOUR BAR CRAWL

THE DIVISADERO CORRIDOR

Like a good basketball team, a good happy hour bar crawl required a range of components, each understanding and mastering its role. By that metric, the Divisadero Corridor is the '96 Chicago Bulls. Fly Bar is the initiator, a low-key spot with a solid beer selection, sake cocktails, cheap sangria, and an arsenal of mini pizzas — all marked down before 6:30 p.m. From there, you can craft a gameplan to your taste. Heavy cocktails? Head to 821. Feeling like whiskey? Tsunami Sushi Bar. Freshly squeezed mixed drinks? Lion's Pub way up the street, past Geary. Something divey? Stroll down to The Page. Every quality bar crawl, of course, needs it quick eats: Pizza at Stelladora, burritos at El Rancho Grande or the The Little Chihuahua, burgers at Acme Burgerhaus, which also has $2 beers before 10 p.m. But, no worries, you can always dance off the calories at Madrone's.

BEST PLACE TO DANCE IF YOU TAKE A WI-FI ENABLED BUS TO WORK

BOOTIE AT DNA LOUNGE

375 11th St., 626-1409
DNALounge.com

Camp and high spectacle are the orders of the day when it comes to Bootie, the long-running Saturday night extravaganza at DNA Lounge. Though its themes change weekly, at its heart it's centered around a soundtrack exclusively comprised of mashups — those genre-bending tracks created by fusing different songs together. In other words, it's a night full of soaring pop choruses and hands-in-the-air moments. But while it's accessible, it also pushes boundaries by throwing aspects of burlesque and drag performance into the mix, and that makes it a perfect spot for techie transplants to feel at home while

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BEST DJ WORK ETHIC

DJ PRIMO

Twitter.com/PrimoPreems

Paris Hilton, Elijah Wood, Thom Yorke, maybe even your 70-year-old grandmother — everyone is trying to be a DJ these days. But while the desire is there, many lack that all-consuming passion for music that lies in the heart of the craft. Not so with local selector DJ Primo, who, since time immemorial, has been a prolific force in turning people on to a world of new and rediscovered sounds: '60s R&B (Oldies Nite, first and third Fridays at the Knockout, 3223 Mission, 550-6994, TheKnockoutSF.com), slow jams and low-rider ballads (Lost & Found, every Tuesday at the Make-Out Room, 3225 22nd, 647-2888, MakeOutRoom.com), Northern soul (Night Beat, every Fourth Saturday at Edinburgh Castle Pub, 950 Geary, 885-4074, CastleNews.com), and even Italian disco (2 Men Will Move You, Second Saturdays at Amnesia, 853 Valencia St., 970-0012, AmnesiaTheBar.com).

BEST CLUB APPROXIMATION OF A THREE-RING CIRCUS

RUBY SKYE

420 Mason, 693-0777
RubySkye.com

Derided by some, but loved by many — Ruby Skye is without question the most circus-like club in San Francisco. Every weekend, the baroquely appointed venue in Union Square treats revelers to a sensory barrage complete with scantily clad go-go dancers, state-of-the-art lights, and huge blasts of CO2. The music is intense too, with regular appearances by some of mainstream dance music's most familiar faces (like Tiestö). If all of that is not circusy enough for you, trust us when we say that even the line to get in is a sideshow worth seeing.

BEST PLACE TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK

HOUSEPITALITY AT F8

1192 Folsom, 857-1192
FEightSF.com

Screw the weekend, here come the

BEST FLAMING DRINKS

BY TAMARA PALMER

Cocktails are on fire all over town. It may often be a cheap gimmick to hide the quality of the concoction, but the true showstoppers are the ones that still dazzle long after they're poured and set aflame. At **Smuggler's Cove** (650 Gough St., 869-1900, SmugglersCoveSF.com), a paradise for Tiki nerds, the icy sweet Top Notch Volcano (pineapple, lime, passion fruit, Maraschino liqueur, and private reserve rum) is intended for four to share, but two often attempt to sink the bowl with extremely tipsy results. It's dramatic enough to demand a special occasion such as a birthday, but there's probably no greater or more flamboyant pick-me-up in town for a bad day at any time of year. One must patiently wait until Christmas time for the Nog O'Mine to emerge at Mission stalwart **Elixir** (3200 16th St., 552-1633, ElixirSF.com), a house-made eggnog amped up with the choice of Meyer's dark rum, Copas organic añejo tequila, or Sailor Jerry rum, and brought to pyrotechnic stage by lighting up a twist of orange peel. Hayes Valley brasserie **Absinthe** (398 Hayes St., 551-1590, Absinthe.com) has one of the most page-turning cocktail menus in San Francisco, rife with literary references and provocative ideas, but the most head-turning selection has to be the Spanish Coffee, a lit blend of rum, Kahlua, brandy, cinnamon, and whipped cream. The crowd at the bar always loosens a bit when when it's sparked up.

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BEST HUMAN CHANDELIER

Mike Hendrickson

ELENA SANDERS

ElenaSanders.com

San Francisco must surely stand as a major battleground in the ever-escalating war among bars for sheer spectacle. Finding the right balance between absurdity and subtlety is somehow key. Elena Sanders knows this as well as anybody. She's the contortionist suspended from a ring betwixt the bars in Monarch, twisting and spinning in a quietly impressive performance that combines the best of things: athleticism, eroticism, and cocktails. Watching her contort and be generally stronger, prettier, and more lithe than yourself, you might also consider that the former Bostonian is also a fashion designer in the "steampunk" vein, meaning she may well be imagining, as she navigates through space, the bloomers and bodices of some weird tomorrow, after the Bar War is finally done.

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weeknight warriors. Their day is Wednesday, and while the rest of the city winds down, they're getting ready for another late night of dancing at Housepitality. For more than two years now, the weekly house-centric party at F8 has offered a world-class experience with a killer cast of resident DJs regularly joined by some of the biggest names in the underground like Recloose, Paul Johnson, and Andrés. It might officially be Hump Day, but for dance music purists and 24-hour party people, there's nothing better until Friday rolls around.

BEST BAR FOR THE DESIGNATED DRIVER

KENNEDY'S IRISH PUB & INDIAN CURRY HOUSE RESTAURANT

1040 Columbus, 441-8855
KennedysCurry.com

Bars can be a real drag for nondrinkers. To the sober, they're crowded, smelly and full of loud, overbearing people. But it's not like that at Kennedy's. This Irish Pub/Indian Curry House in North Beach has plenty of space, clean decor, and genuinely good food. There is a back patio, pool table, video games, and a full menu of Indian entrees and appetizers. The soups are a cheap snack at $3-$4 each, and the veggie samosas are killer. Perhaps best of all, though, is the air hockey table. After all, air hockey really isn't a game for the intoxicated. So the later it gets, the easier it is to rule the table. Happy hunting.

BEST GROUTFITI

THE PHOENIX

811 Valencia St., 695-1811
PhoenixIrishBar.com

In the days before Angry Birds, bored and intellectually curious people sitting on public commodes used to engage in the art of "groutfiti." In essence, this is the scrawling of grout-related puns in the grouting of restrooms; examples include "grout balls of fire," "The Grout Gatsby," and "grout barrier reef." This is most common in college towns, which San Francisco isn't exactly. But you can find

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BEST PLACES TO GO WHEN THE MIDWAY SHUTS DOWN

Public Works

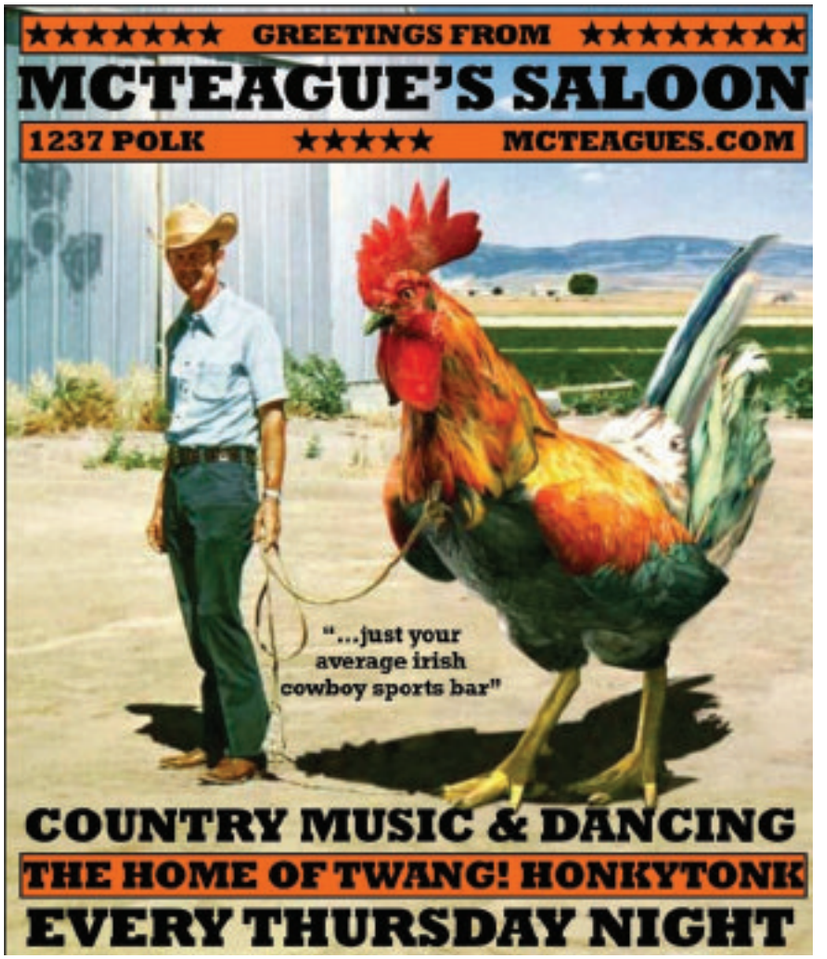
BY DEREK OPPERMAN

Don't believe anyone who tells you that nothing good happens after 2 a.m. in San Francisco. Stick it out past last call, and a whole freak show of hardcore partying awaits, if you know where to look.

These are the places where people dance 'til 4 a.m. or later despite the lack of alcohol — nobody cares, nobody's on it anyway. Should you seek out this carnival, the first stop on your itinerary ought to be **Monarch** (101 Sixth St., 284-9774, MonarchSF.com). Situated in the SoMa, its subterranean space is populated by a young and fashionable crowd, and its late-night license means you can enjoy the venue's ultra-lux sound system until the wee hours.

That might sound too chic for some, in which case another option is getting lost in the sweaty vibe of **Mighty** (119 Utah, 762-0151, Mighty119.com). Its wooden dancefloor and unusually loud system make it a popular choice for break-dancers and house-heads looking to go all night (it sometimes closes at 5 a.m.) Alternatively, if you're just coming off a bender in the Mission bar scene, try **Public Works** (161 Erie, 779-6757, PublicSF.com). Step inside and be bathed in the club's floor-to-ceiling projections while listening to some of the most cutting-edge techno and house the city has to offer; don't look at your watch, it might feel early, but it's actually 3:30 a.m.

However, for the truly hardcore, there is only one real option: **The EndUp** (401 Sixth St., 646-0999, TheEndup.com). With a history dating to 1973, it operates on a grandfathered all-hours license that allows it to remain open from Friday to Monday continuously, with some patrons choosing to stay there all weekend. Bring your sunglasses; you'll need them when you stumble out onto the patio for a smoke. That might seem like the last stop on the line, but true hedonists finish their weekends at **Monroe** (473 Broadway, 772-9002, MonroeSF.com). Every Sunday morning, starting at 6 a.m., the North Beach ultralounge opens its doors to host those night owls looking for a dark and comfortable place to come down from an evening of fun. We advise you to order a screwdriver, find a booth, and enjoy the show.



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(415) 621-2378 | www.theramprestaurant.com

WEEKEND BRUNCH
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LUNCH WEEKDAYS
11:00am 4:00pm

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6:00pm – 9:00pm
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SUNDAY LATIN SOUNDS MUSIC
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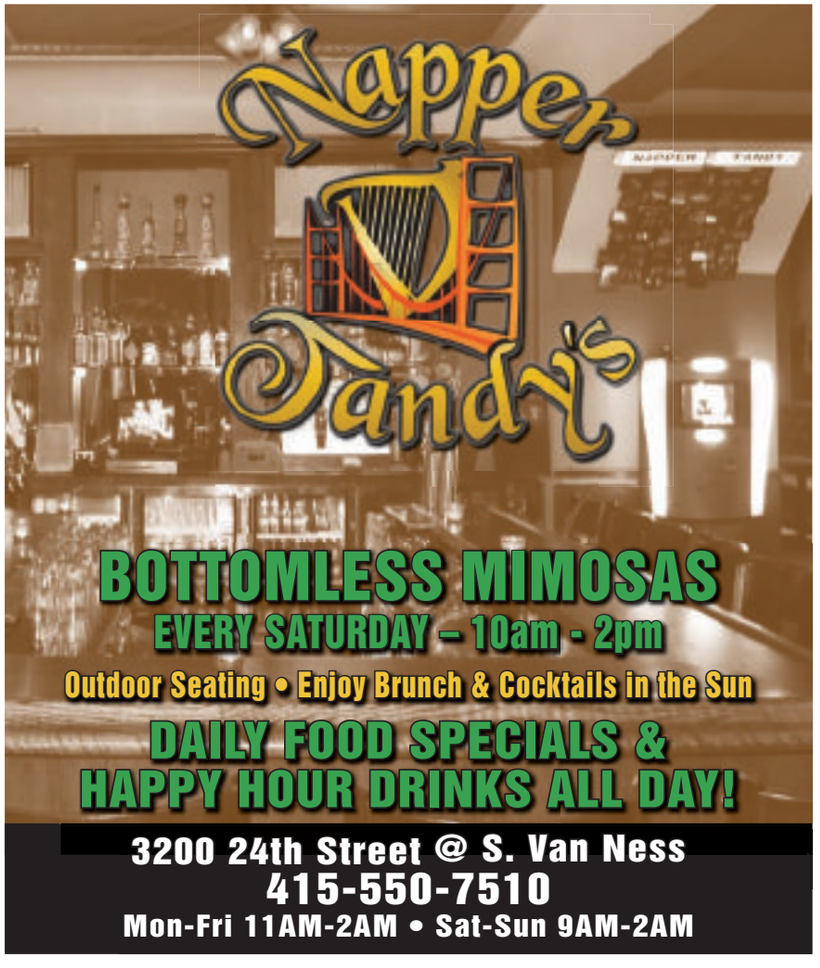

examples of this lost and lamented art on the walls of The Phoenix's commode. It's enough to make you want to twist and grout.

BEST FUNHOUSE

BUCKSHOT

3848 Geary Blvd., 831-8838

This bar and game room out in the Inner Richmond puts a whole new twist on the term "drinking games." Forget the college classics like flip cup, beer pong, or kings when you're putting back the booze. Instead, travel back further into your childhood and play a slew of arcade games, including hipster favorite Big Buck Hunter. Have fun challenging your friends at the pinball machines, rolling some Skee-Balls, shooting pool, throwing darts or shuffling on the shuffleboard table. Between plays, snap some photos in the photo booth for a take-home souvenir. As an added bonus, snack on some chicken-fried bacon, handmade corn dogs, buttermilk onion rings, cornflake-crusted chicken strips, or garlic fries. Just wipe your hands clean before you get grease all over the game.

BEST SUCKA FREE BLOODY MARY

ST. MARY'S PUB

3845 Mission, 529-1325

The true red-and-gold fans weren't out on Valencia after the 49ers downed the Falcons to make their first Super Bowl since Steve Young days. They were out in lowriders along Mission Street, popping in for a sip on a vinyl-covered seat at the time capsule of a bar at the top of the hill between the Excelsior and Bernal. Blessings from Santa Maria include the Santa Maria itself — a tequila, Chambord and agave nectar libation — and on weekends, when doors open at noon, there are the seven made-from-scratch types of Bloody Marys, with spins including chipotle, masala, and sundried tomato and basil pesto, along with the classic. If these don't soothe your aching soul and head from all the San Franciscans (Bulleit, Fernet, and Amaretto) you drank the night before, nothing will.

BEST CURE-ALL COCKTAIL

Lou Bustamante

PORT AU PRINCE AT SMUGGLER'S COVE

650 Gough, 869-1900
SmugglersCoveSF.com

We all need a drink sometimes. When a day serves up more than a reasonable amount of grief verging on the comedic, there is only one tried and true elixir that has the power to restore and dispel bad voodoo: the Port Au Prince ($10, Rhum Barbancourt 5-Star, lime, pineapple juice, Velvet Falernum, grenadine, Angostura Bitters) at tiki temple Smuggler's Cove. Don the Beachcomber created the cocktail in the 1930s as a potion to showcase Haitian rum, and while the original recipe contained a blend of rums, Smuggler's Cove owner Martin Cate tweaked the recipe to only use Haitian rum. Tropical and refreshing, served in a tall glass filled with crushed ice and a little umbrella, the cocktail may not contain actual magic, but it sure does taste like it.

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Best Predictor of a Rough Morning to Come

Chinese Mai Tai at Li Po

916 Grant, 982-0072
LiPoLounge.com

Like most bad decisions, it seems like a good one at the time. The charmingly shabby Chinese dive, Li Po, is known for one thing: a concoction called the Chinese Mai Tai. The drink is a lethal blend of Whaler's Rum, Castillo Light Rum, Bacardi 151, pineapple juice, and a mysterious "Chinese liqueur," which is given a quick whir in a blender and served frothy and cold in a plastic hurricane glass. The only thing missing is the umbrella. Chinese Mai Tais are more dangerous than the average cocktail because they're ridiculously easy to drink, considering the amount of booze in them. One is regrettable, two is asking for trouble, and after three you are no longer accountable for your actions, and are likely to wake up the next morning after passing out in all your clothes, with a dry mouth and pounding head from all that alcohol and sugar. And that's if you make it to your bed at all.

Best Bar with Free Popcorn

Lucky 13

2140 Market, 487-1313

We've all had nights where we realize too late that we never ate dinner and have to put something in our stomach besides beer, but don't want to leave the bar. That's when you really appreciate a bar with free popcorn. Several spots in the city have it, but our favorite is Lucky 13 — the popcorn is always fresh, and it's paired with free cheddar Goldfish, a great beer selection, good prices, a pool table, and an enclosed patio. The staff was unable to estimate how much popcorn they put in the large, old-timey machine each night, but say that, without fail, it's gone in the morning.

Best Place to Pick Up a Circus Performer

Supperclub

657 Harrison, 348-0900
SupperClub.com

Someone at Supperclub took the business adage "pay people well, or treat them well," to heart. This place is really nice to its performers. So nice, in fact, that the performers are allowed to invite their friends to watch the show for free. And who do aerialists, acrobats, contortionists and dancers hang out with? Other fabulous circus peeps, of course. This means that on any given weekend at Supperclub, the toned bodies and limber limbs of the local circus community are likely to be having a drink at the next table — or since this is Supperclub, the next bed. Slide on over and chat them up now, or forever wish you had.

MONARCH

Happy Hour Mon - Fri 5:30pm - 7:30pm
Mon - Fri 5:30pm - 2am
Sat - Sun 8:a- 2am

lounge upstairs - club downstairs

5.29 J Boogie - Dj M3 - Kimmy Le Funk
5.31 Jazzanova - Fred Everything - Joey Alnza

6.01 Waifs & Strays (UK) Galen - Dax
6.08 Stacy Pullen - Rooz - Bo
6.15 Frank Roger (FR) - Jimmy B - Dan Suda
6.21 James Holden - Bells & Whistles - Rich Korach
6.22 My Favorite Robot (UK) - DATE NITE (live)
6.29 Juan MacLean (dj set) - Kim Anne Fox - Blaksheep
6.30 Magda (Berlin)

7.04 Jerome Iol - Samo Soundboy - Dj Funeral
7.05 Christian loeffler
7.12 Drumcell
7.13 Psychemagik (UK) - Anthony Mansfiled - M3 - Shiny Objects
7.27 Cyril Hahn - Sleazemore - Richie Panic

8.03 Pezzner - Johnny Fiasco - Jon Lemon -Rick Preston
8.09 Stanton Warriors (UK)
8.15 The Revenge (Uk) - Sleight of Hands - Anthony Mansfield
8.16 Mark Farina - Derick Carter - Sharon Buck
8.21 Soul Clap
8.23 Ellen Alien (UK)

9.13 Dusky (UK)
9.14 Ejeca (UK)
9.27 Âme (Germany)

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BEST REASON TO FALL INTO A POOL AT THE BAR

CHAMBERS BAR AT THE PHOENIX HOTEL

601 Eddy, 829-2316
Chambers-SF.com

We know a motor lodge in the middle of the Tenderloin, where a retro-cool room can be had mere steps away from a Christmas-light-illuminated pool complete with kitschy art around it. We also know we had you at "motor lodge" and "Tenderloin." Happily, the mid-century fun and games aren't just for the hip folks staying in a room poolside; any visitor is welcome to find solace in the Kennedy-era courtyard and ponder the waters. We also understand the Phoenix has a rock-and-roll history, which may come in handy when you need to explain away the wet clothes over another margarita.

Thank You

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Asa Akira
June 20-22

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Jayden Lee
June 27-29

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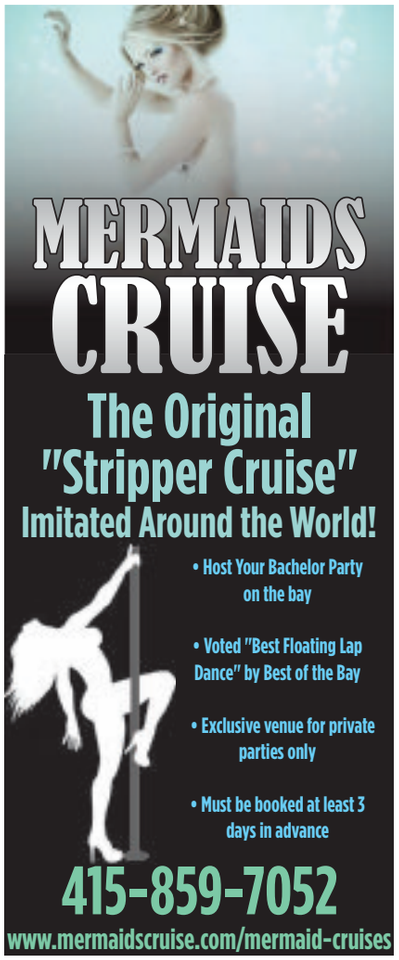
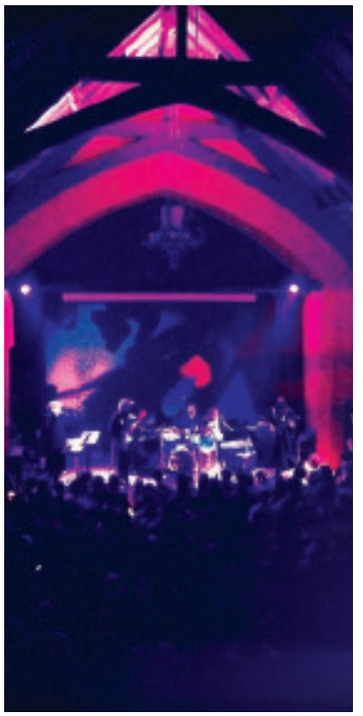


BEST NEW LIVE VENUE

THE CHAPEL

777 Valencia, 551-5157
TheChapelSF.com

Who says there's no such thing as life after death? For several years, the 1914-era former mortuary at 777 Valencia St. sat dormant, waiting as the surrounding neighborhood experienced an infusion of vitality. In the fall of 2012, it finally rose from the grave. Thanks to local restaurateur Jack Knowles, the elegant old Tudor-style building became the Chapel, the city's newest and finest midsize venue (soon it'll be a full-blown restaurant, too). With high ceilings, envious acoustics, red-painted walls, and smart bookings, the place quickly leaped to the forefront of S.F. clubs. Its stage has since gracefully hosted a plethora of talent, from local folk-rock weirdos to the likes of comedian Dave Chappelle. And it's also the official West Coast home of New Orleans' Preservation Hall Jazz Band. As fans of the clear sightlines, crisp sound, and its two, well-stocked bars, we're very pleased this stately old building found a second life.



Britt Govea

BEST PLACE TO EXPERIENCE THE OLD DIVISADERO

CLUB WAZIEMA

543 Divisadero, 346-6641
ClubWaziema.com

Listen up, whippersnappers, and let us tell you of the Old Days of Divisadero, before Bi-Rite, before third-wave coffee and locally sourced artisan cocktails, before baby-friendly boutiques and big, broad bike lanes. Divisadero Street was a working-class four-lane ribbon drawing a colorful line through the middle of San Francisco. And one of the best bars on it was Club Waziema, a former jazz venue that became an Ethiopian restaurant and low-key watering hole — not quite a dive, but not a place that ever seemed too big for its britches, either. Waziema still stands today, and contrasts sharply with the upwardly mobile flavors increasingly dominating the neighborhood. Its understated ambiance — paisley red wallpaper, dim lighting, exposed wood — will remind you of days when bars could just have regular paint and wallpaper instead of "décor," when there was a larger middle ground between "upscale" and "shithole." The place also has a vibrant history, having hosted the likes of Billie Holiday and Marvin Gaye in a former incarnation. Its current owners keep photos from those old days on the back walls. But aside from maybe the Popeyes down the street, Club Waziema is now Divisadero's best reminder of what the area was like a few years ago — a past that may be quite recent, but is still very much gone.

BEST NEGRONI ON TAP

JASPER'S CORNER TAP & KITCHEN

401 Taylor, 775-7979
JaspersCornerTap.com

Campari is not for the faint of heart (or head, or liver). Neither are gin and vermouth mixed in equal parts with the ruby red Italian liqueur into the most acerbic and savory of cocktails. Courage for this liquid is centered at this hotel district corner spot, where on occasion Fernet cocktails — at one time, the Hanky Panky — also froth forward via a pull of the handles. But as you sip, keep in mind this is a bartender's bar, so dispense with the ersatz mixologist knowledge and your proclivity for infused what-have-you. But do keep bartender Kevin Diedrich's cocktails quite literally flowing, and you just may learn something.

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